

The History of a Riot: Class, Popular Protest and Violence in Early Colonial Nelson

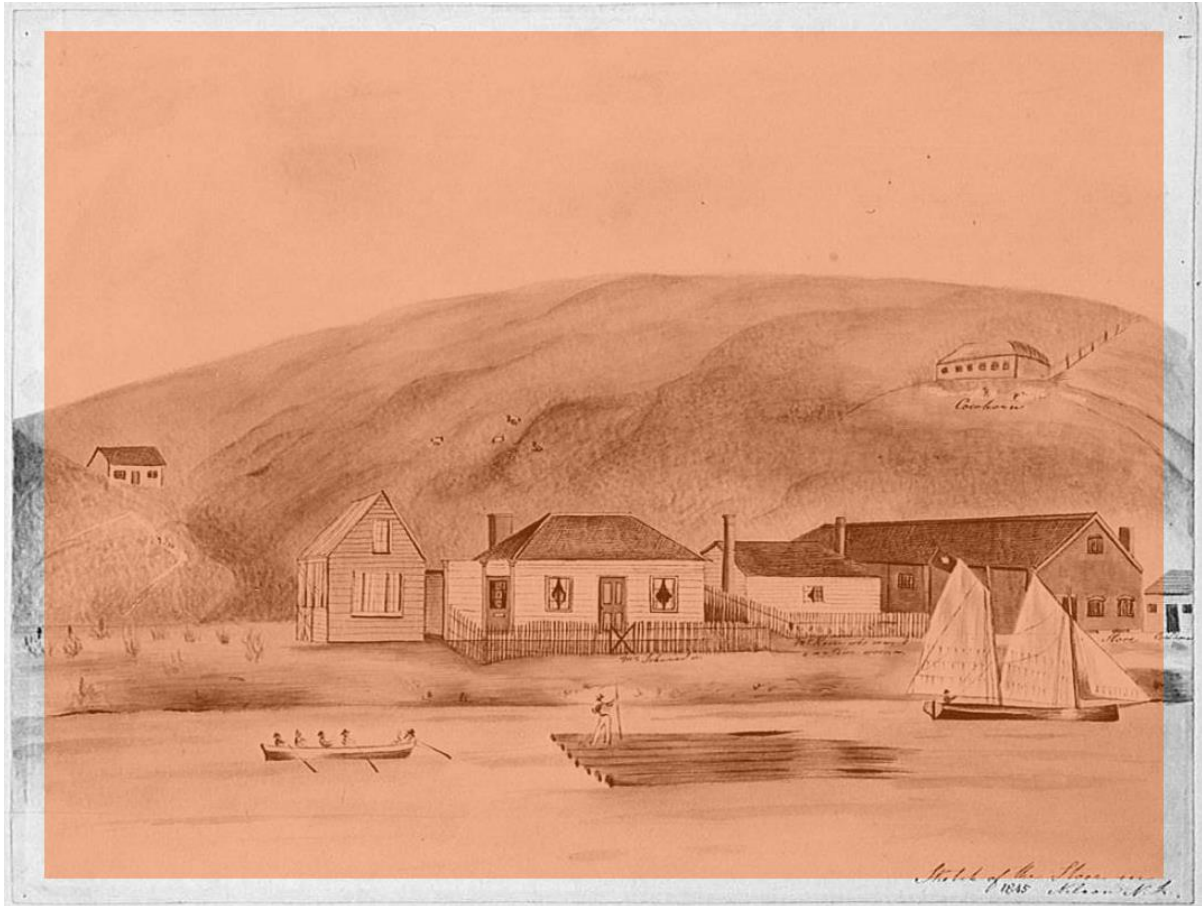
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Published by the Labour History Project
PO Box 27425, Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand

First published in January 2020
ISBN: 978-0-473-51230-9



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Longueville, Sketch of the store in Nelson, New Zealand, 1845. Nelson Provincial Museum, Bett Loan Collection AC804

On Saturday 26 August 1843, pay day for the gang-men employed on the New Zealand Company's public relief works, acting police magistrate George White frantically prepared for the confrontation to come. Having deployed Nelson's entire police force to the port and hidden them inside houses surrounding the Company store, White was on his way himself when he was met by a constable in haste. An angry group of 70 to 80 gang-men, armed with guns, clubs and the collective experience of months of continuous conflict, were waiting for him. White sent for reinforcements, hoping the Sheriff could muster up some settlers as special constables. "The generality of the persons however were very reluctant to be sworn in, and some refused."¹ Settlers believed that they too would become objects of attack. Class lines between settlers and labourers had been drawn. In fact, they were there from the beginning.

The next hour would not go well for White. Nor was it the first time White, his fellow magistrates and the New Zealand Company officials had confronted the gang-men – agricultural labourers, artisans and their wives who found themselves relying on relief work not dissimilar to schemes administered by the English parishes they had only recently left behind. For the directors of the Company, "nearly all the evils of the old English Poor Law system prevailed in the Settlement", and they repeatedly demanded an end to a scheme that was so drastically draining their funds.² For White, the gang-men's continued efforts to assert control over their situation had created a power vacuum in the young settlement: Nelson was "in a state little short of Anarchy and Civil War."³

But what of the gang-men themselves? Who were they, and what had led them to such acts of collective revolt? The events of August and September 1843 were a culmination of struggles, including 'combination', petitions, public meetings, strikes, go-slows, work refusal, violence to both persons and property, and armed revolt. The self-activity of the gang-men had a significant impact on the development of Nelson. Yet much of the existing literature on this period simply list the men as 'labourers' – a faceless mass whose collective agency is inferred but given little political weight, or dismissed as relatively peaceful.⁴ Causality is put down to simple hardship, the result of an imbalance between capital and labour in the settlement that dissipates with time; the gang-men's future as pioneering colonial farmers a teleological given.

If the gang-men remain nameless in most histories, then their wives fare even worse. As Kristyn Harman notes, personal accounts of working people's experiences in early colonial New Zealand are scarce due to illiteracy. The voices of working-class emigrants – especially working-class women – are under-represented.⁵ Not to mention the inattention of male-focused histories to gender and gendered work, one of the defining features of the lives of the labouring poor in the nineteenth century but something that is too often relegated to the side-lines of the male experience.⁶ The hidden half of the gang-men's struggle was the reproductive labour of their wives, who marshalled wit, kin networks and class-based strategies of making shift to complement the Company's meagre rations.

What follows is a microhistory of collective revolt. It attempts to uncover the people involved, the handling of their situation in class ways and the impact they had on the composition of capitalist relations in 1840s Nelson. The emigrants who travelled steerage across unforgiving oceans had names, families and a history, bringing with them traditions of collective rituals, shared labour and memories of agricultural and political unrest. How did their experience of popular protest before arriving in Nelson play out in their struggle? And how did they force the Company to rethink its plans for colonisation and recompose wage and property relations in Nelson? As Geoff Eley notes, "the collective action of ordinary people exposes the fallacy of treating 'violence', 'protest', or 'disorder' as a world apart, as a phenomenon distinct from high politics, as a mere reaction to stress... By the actions that authorities call disorder, ordinary people fight injustice, challenge exploitation, and claim their own place in the structure of power."⁷

After a brief discussion of class, Part I continues with a narrative of events surrounding the tumultuous pay day of 26 August 1843. Part II shifts in focus to the who, how and why. Using the pay lists of the New Zealand Company, I detail the 70-odd men of the gangs most involved, and explore their forms of collective resistance with reference to their past experiences of parish relief and popular protest. Following Raewyn Dalziel, I believe the agricultural backgrounds of many of the emigrants and the conflicts of the English countryside – including but not limited to the Swing Riots of 1830/31 – played a role in structuring the gang-men's response to their situation.⁸ Finally, Part III tells how the power of the gang-men was countered by the Company. It draws on theories of class composition – with its focus on worker's resistance to capital and capital's efforts to decompose such class resistance – to analyse the dynamic of capitalist development in 1840s Nelson. Settler privilege, in the form of access to land, played a significant role in the division and ultimate decomposition of the gang-men's power.

George White could be forgiven for doubting the wisdom of his posting. The acting magistrate had arrived on 12 July 1843 from Wellington, where his editorials in the *Wellington Gazette* had earned him a reputation as a republican and “low radical.”⁹ To the dismay of the Company’s Principal Agent, William Wakefield, White had applauded the Treaty of Waitangi and denounced the Company as a fraud perpetrated in England by a set known as the Forty Thieves. He’d also defended the very people who had killed the magistrate he was replacing. For White was in Nelson because of the Wairau Affray of 17 June 1843, where a taua (war party) of Ngāti Toa had forcibly resisted settler encroachment into disputed lands.¹⁰ The violent deaths of 22 Pākehā and at least four Māori sent shockwaves throughout the fledging settler communities. White had angered many colonists by ridiculing the Company’s assumed possession of Wairau. His welcome to Nelson was anything but. The resident magistrates simply refused to recognise him.

As White navigated the politics of the Company’s second colony in New Zealand, the violence of Wairau compounded violence of another kind: poverty. Edward Gibbon Wakefield’s theory of colonisation, and his faith in the sufficient price attracting capital and labour to Nelson in harmonious balance, had been wrecked on the shoals of surplus population and proletarian resistance. “What emerged was not a set of small, intensively farmed holdings on which English capitalists and English labourers worked happily together to recreate Surrey and Kent” writes Chris Wilkes, but large-scale sheep holdings, an impoverished and unruly working class and rows of untilled plots reserved for absentee land owners.¹¹ The settlers of Nelson may have imagined an impending Māori attack, but as White would soon learn, the wrath of working-class revolt was very real.

Many writers since have questioned whether the Company was successful in recruiting the type of labour they wanted. James Dakin’s study of the Company’s working-class emigrants in Wellington, Nelson and New Plymouth found agricultural labourers to be the main occupational group but noted the high presence of artisans, mechanics and carpenters.¹² Ruth Allan argued that artisans and not agricultural labourers were the largest group among the first arrivals to Nelson.¹³ This changed with the arrival of further emigrants. White’s census of October 1843 noted that of Nelson’s population of 2,942, there were 323 farm labourers and servants, 272 artisans, carpenters, bricklayers and other similar trades, 83 (overwhelmingly women) domestic servants and 70 occupied in other professions.¹⁴

My interest in this question is not in terms of the scheme’s success or failure, but how the gang-men’s past relationship to the wage influenced their struggle. I use ‘relationship to the wage’ rather than ‘occupation’ purposefully. As Jacques Rancière notes in ‘The Myth of the Artisan’, we should be wary of making stark divisions between workers based on trade. “The term ‘artisan’ evokes for us a certain stability, a certain identification of an individual with a function. Yet identities are often misleading... the same individual can be found self-employed in one trade, salaried in another, or hired as a clerk or peddler in a third.”¹⁵ Some emigrants lied about their occupations. Upon arrival at the office of a Company agent, agricultural labourer and future gang-man Charles Clark re-invented himself as a sawyer.

A more useful mode of analysis is class. Contrary to stratification theories of class based on occupation, hierarchy, status or income differentials – theories that are so prevalent in New Zealand historiography but often tell us little about lived social relations and the qualitative antagonisms within them – I understand class as a *relationship* and a *process*, mediated through other social relations such as gender, sexuality and race. To paraphrase Stuart Hall, social relations like gender and race are the modality through which class is lived. Class

is never only about class.¹⁶ Nor can it be understood outside of its historical context and the agency of historical subjects. The specificity of class situations and how people handle those situations in class ways enables us to analyse qualitative social breaks, class composition and the lived experience of conflict. Thrown onto relief works, emigrant labourers became 'gang-men' with a shared set of working conditions and adversaries. Their relationship to Company officials, to the wage and to the land helped shape their struggle.

There were also divisions of labour within Nelson's working class. Iris Young called for substituting the category of class with division of labour, arguing that it better registered specific cleavages and contradictions within a class, the concrete activity of labour itself and the specific social and institutional relations of that activity.¹⁷ In the Nelson context, the activity of certain types of work on and off the gangs was one division of labour (all of which were mediated by sexual divisions of labour and not necessarily aligned with occupation), as were religious beliefs, the work ethic and politics of respectability, and importantly, the access to or desire for land.¹⁸ Company officials tried to exploit such divisions – between the 'indolent' and 'industrious', the 'independent' and 'loafers' – but as we shall see, it was on the issue of land that they were most successful.

Are our gang-men navvies, labourers, artisans and mechanics, working-men, the working class, plebeians or the proletariat? And how do these labels illuminate or hide gender relations? Joshua Clover reminds us that 'working-class' was not a term developed by Marx but one with roots in the practice of eighteenth-century factory inspectors and sociological studies. As a static model it can exclude a swath of people (often women) who may not work for a wage but are nonetheless conditioned by it. The proletariat – with its original meaning of those "without reserves" – better captures the agricultural and industrial poor.¹⁹ It certainly fits the experience of the Nelson gang-men and their wives. Their proletarianization in England and elsewhere factored in their migration to Nelson, where, as surplus population, they quickly became surplus to capital's needs and found themselves drawing on relief and other means of survival (such as the gendered work of making shift, described below). Yet somehow it feels heretical to use 'proletariat' in a New Zealand context, where past historians have asked whether New Zealanders "have or have had a bourgeoisie and a proletariat, and a struggle between the two", and where class struggle analysis remains marginal, under-utilised or seen as irrelevant or outdated.²⁰

What language did the gang-men use to describe themselves? While some of their contemporaries chose terms to describe class arbitrarily, "those who saw workers as a collective of mute, suffering people tended to use terms such as 'labourers', 'the labouring classes', or 'the poor'. Those who associated the poor with anger tended to speak rather of 'workers', 'working men', 'working classes' or 'the working class'. The latter term also embodied a claim for redistribution."²¹ The gang-men made frequent use of 'the working class' and 'working men', while their so-called betters also used 'working men', 'working class', 'labouring classes' and 'labourers' depending on the context (not to mention the 'mob', the 'refractory', and the 'indolent, insolent and contumacious'). Nelson's Resident Agent, Arthur Wakefield, decried the "rum Lancashire coves" among the steerage passengers of the *Martha Ridgway* – Lancashire being associated with Luddism and other working-class struggles.²² Samuel Stephens, a surveyor who in late-1843 complained that labourers in his employ were leaving him for the Company's relief wages, believed many of the emigrants to be "worthless vagabonds – the refuse of society in England and little or no better than a gang of convicts."²³ Company officials and land owners reserved for themselves the terms 'settler', 'colonist', 'landowner' or 'gentleman'. In turn they were derided as 'pretend capitalists' by the gang-men.

Yet as Joan Scott reminds us, the study of language is not to look at the literal usage of words but the creation of meaning through differentiation.²⁴ And as the future gang-men and their wives crossed gangplanks and boarded ships bound for Nelson, their understandings of class and its antagonisms immediately found fertile fields.²⁵ Protesting the poor provisions and the conduct of their captain, steerage passengers aboard the *Phoebe* signed a joint statement demanding redress. After throwing their bouilli soup overboard on route, sixteen passengers on the *Indus* did likewise. These were signs of things to come. Five of the *Phoebe* and five of the *Indus* signatories were members of the Waimea East gangs that revolted on 26 August 1843.²⁶

The assertion of demands was a precedent that continued in Nelson. On their first Saturday ashore, the labourers of the first ship to Nelson protested at working beyond 1pm that day. Their protest resulted in the establishment of a 9-hour day, 50-hour working week with an hour for lunch, despite the Company's Chief Surveyor Frederick Tuckett refusing an 8-hour day and wanting longer hours from the men.²⁷ Carpenters 'combined' to fix wages, resolving at a meeting on 6 May 1842 that no carpenter should work for less than 12s a day.²⁸ At a time when acts against combination had only recently been repealed in England and persecution of nascent workers organisations was common, these were considerable wins.

For a while labour was king. "Wages are at present ruinously high" wrote a colonist in April 1842. "A common labourer cannot be had under 6s. a-day, carpenters 12s., and sawyers 15s. Of course, while this lasts very little can be done, but when we have more emigrants labour will certainly become more reasonable, though never perhaps so low as at home. It is a splendid country for the working classes."²⁹ Arthur Wakefield believed the rates were exorbitant and looked forward to more labour in the settlement to bring the rates down.³⁰ Indeed, William Cullen suggested potential-colonists should bring out their own labourers. "It is hard to get a person here that cares anything about work; at least they won't do a master justice. Here are a great many pigs running wild and catching them suits many better than work."³¹

The situation did not last. The Company had banked on capitalists migrating to Nelson to become the employers of working-class emigrants. Yet many land purchasers were absentee landowners who never left England. Of the 432 sections of 150 acres sold, 352 were owned by absentees.³² The land owners that did emigrate were either delayed in getting onto the land or did not have enough capital to become large-scale employers. As more and more ships filled with the proletariat arrived in Nelson, they faced decreasing wages and very little employment opportunities.

For many emigrants, a major drawcard of the Nelson scheme had been the Company's promise of employment. Yet "this promise was, for some time, weakly and dishonourably denied; but was soon proved by the production of the Company's printed papers, and enforced by a demonstration of overwhelming physical force."³³ Arthur Wakefield was forced to provide employment and organised a system of relief work, "which was expensive for the Company and demoralising for the men. All, without regard to their physical conditions or previous training, were offered road work under the Company at the uniform rate of one guinea... although some useful drains were dug and some necessary trunk roads formed, the price was too high both in terms of cash and the human spirit."³⁴ Wakefield was aware of the problem, writing to his brother that "the expense however is not the only inconvenience: it is creating great discontent amongst the labouring class... I am convinced that this surplus of one class is very injurious to the settlement."³⁵

From April 1842 onwards there were always at least 50 men without employment.³⁶ By November 1842, there were 120 men on the Company's pay roll. A month later there were over 300.³⁷ Relief work was costing the Company over £1000 per month.

The Company's Directors in England were aghast at the amount being spent and attempted to reduce costs in several ways. In July 1842, Company agents in England and elsewhere were ordered to drop the pledge of providing guaranteed employment to emigrants. And in Nelson, Arthur Wakefield was told to cut costs or avoid providing any relief at all. "Nothing short of actual physical suffering from destitution should induce you to relax the rule in this respect."³⁸ Yet the Company did not want to stop public works completely, for it had cut a deal with the British government. If the Company spent £40,000 on public works before the end of 1844, the government would grant the Company 100,000 acres of additional land.³⁹ Despite the financial cost, the Company was eager to reap the landed reward that came with it.

The Company also faced a disappointed, well-organised and increasingly hostile proletariat that actively resisted any worsening of their situation. "The state of things in Nelson is disheartening" wrote Stephens on Christmas Day in 1842. "There is no money in circulation, consequently many labourers are unemployed excepting by the Company – who are under engagement to employ the emigrants for twelve months after they come out. Scarce any capitalists have come out and very few purchasers of land."⁴⁰ After Arthur Wakefield reduced rates to 14s in cash plus 7lb rations of meat, flour, tea and sugar, "a few firebrands organised a strike for higher wages in September 1842, but after the men had abstained from roadwork for about 10 days without effect, they returned to their picks and shovels."⁴¹

There was more serious strike action in January 1843, beginning with the drafting of a petition on Sunday 14 January, the gang-men's only day off. "We the working men of Nelson earnestly request you to take our case into serious consideration" began their petition to Wakefield.⁴² Written in a sarcastic, confident and at-times metaphoric language, the Petition of the Working Men of Nelson is a fine example of (gendered) working-class voice in colonial New Zealand. As well as showing their class consciousness and knowledge of other colonisation schemes (citing the Canadian example), the petition represented a veiled threat to Wakefield and the Company despite its deferential talk of law and order:

"We have been seduced from our fatherland our homes and friends by the flattering pretensions of the New Zealand Company we have endured considerable hardships and exposed to the dangers and perils of the deep... merely to gratify the ambition and add to the wealth of the New Zealand Company...

The Company's 16th Regulation guarantees to us Employment provided that we cannot meet with it elsewhere it does not guarantee subsistence but expresses the word Employment distinctly. Now sir we are not total strangers to the somewhat unpleasant nature of the situation you hold, placed as a daysman between the working class and the pretended landowners poor unfortunate Victims they have fell a sacrifice [sic] the tongue of flattery about this Splendid country as well as we have. They have contrived by what Means it is not for us to say to raise the wind when they were in England on order to purchase a section or 2 of land to get the Splendid name of Landowner and a cabin passage free to this place but alas for them as well as for us their hopes are vanquished on beholding the Shore that their destined to land upon for instead of finding Elysian fields and Groves adorned with every beauty of Nature, they have found unsightly and barren Hills and Mountains covered over with fern which has

fed on the Soil for ages. Then instead of the bread fruit tree there is the flax tree in a Swampy piece of ground...

The Company as well as we the working men are imposed upon by these pretend capitalists who forsooth we are informed have been endeavouring to persuade you that you are fighting against their interests by giving us such High wages Heaven help them surely some of them must have been Clerks or Underwriters to the Poor Law Commissioners before they came here & it would be a sad pity for you to injure them in the least...

Now Captain Wakefield If you do not stretch forth your hand to the working class in Nelson you will never have a Colony and will not that be a burden on your breast to bear. It is a well known fact that many of these pretend Capitalists are reduced already to all but starving point and In order to get their flesh again they want you to permit them to feed upon our blood and vitals. Shiners with them are something like Angels Visits few and far between in fact there is little or no money in the Colony except the Company's, and we at present are the only circulating medium. On you Sir as you are the (Visa : Versa :) success of the Colony depends. If you refuse to stand by the working man of Nelson you sign its Death warrant and seal its doom as a Colony. Does any reasonable man think taking into consideration the state of everything that 14/- p. week with 7 lbs. rations for a family a man his wife and 2 children, the man 9 or 10 miles from his mud home keeping two tables then where is the clothes to come from and as for shoes there is no end to the wear and tear of them from the nature of our work and the travelling from port to pillar and back again. Before we left England we were told that if we could not get work nowhere else they [sic] Company would give us one guinea p. week with rations, and this we consider our lawful rights & of this is refused our Confidence in the company will be so far abused we only want a Right and Legal thing and our Motto in endeavouring to gain this right shall be peace, tranquillity and concord... we hope you will examine these things minutely and all for grievances sink into oblivion.

The petition has no named author and simply ends with: "We remain yours in Peace Law and Order, The Working Men of Nelson."⁴³

The next morning, a Monday and workday, the 300 gang-men struck work, assembled as a body and marched through the township to the Port. The procession would have crossed Saltwater Creek Bridge and headed along Haven Road towards the Company store beyond Auckland Point (on Wakefield Quay), passing the Māori trading site at Matangi Awhio. Were they noisy? Orderly? Did they repeat the rumour of an impending wage cut or discuss the petition and their demands? Wakefield met them near the Company store, where delegates went forward and addressed both Wakefield and the strikers. Threats of leaving for Sydney were made. Wakefield replied they were free to go but questioned whether such a move would improve their lot, especially without having knowledge of the situation there. One of the gang-men then spoke up and said "he could not live upon the wages he now had and his rations."⁴⁴ Wakefield answered bureaucratically, itemising the prices of various necessities and argued they were all affordable at 14s per week. He refused their demand of one guinea.

The strikers then assembled in a nearby brickfield where people had their say. "Strong language was used and resolutions were passed, including one to ask the Governor of New South Wales to send a ship for them."⁴⁵ It was decided to continue their strike and march on the Company store again the following day, which they did. The demand for a wage rise was repeated and again Wakefield spoke to them as before. Except this time he

held out the possibility of acquiring land “they could call their own, and so eventually raise themselves above the condition which necessitated working for wages at all.”⁴⁶

There are conflicting accounts of what happened next. According to the *Nelson Examiner*, the crowd thanked Wakefield “for the kind manner in which he had met them, and separated. On Wednesday morning the whole of them, without exception, we believe, returned to their work.”⁴⁷ Yet Nelson colonist Alfred Saunders wrote later that many of the gang-men were armed and were “only restrained from robbing the Company’s store by the calm of Wakefield, and from looting the town by the moderating eloquence of John Perry Robinson”, a Birmingham woodturner and gang-man who had participated in Chartist agitation before emigrating, and who would go on to become Superintendent of Nelson.⁴⁸ It is possible Saunders conflated the January strike with the events of 26 August. It is equally possible that there were both armed gang-men and differences of opinion throughout the January strike – differences over tactics, what action to take next and how far to push their struggle. Guns were certainly present at later events.

It is also unclear whether women were present. William Pratt recalled how:

amusing scenes sometimes occurred at the attempted reductions referred to; upon the men being informed that the wages at the next pay-day would be so much less than hitherto, they would quietly smile at the information, and proceed to their work as usual, feeling confident their cause was in good hands. And when Saturday noon, the pay-time, arrived, the men's wives would muster about 200 strong, and in true Amazonian style, march in a body down the beach to the pay-office at the port, and sturdily refusing to submit to any reductions, keep up such a clamour that the officials, after sustaining a two or three hours' siege, would receive orders to pay the old rate, and matters would go on again in their old groove until the next fit of retrenchment came on, when a similar scene would be enacted and generally with the same result.

Pratt may be alluding to the occupation of Tuckett’s office one Saturday in July 1843, after he attempted (unsuccessfully) to change weekly payments to fortnightly ones.⁴⁹ For three hours a “disorderly mob” armed with clubs and guns threatened Tuckett with violence if he did not pay them (he was finally rescued by the intervention of a magistrate “in fear of a Riot”).⁵⁰ Or Pratt could be hinting at a cycle of struggles involving gang-men and their wives that have not been documented in other sources. As Adrian Randall notes, “overt protest was not the first response to hardship and to exploitation and oppression but often the final stage of what we may describe as ‘community micro-politics’ in which different forms of pressure, persuasion, and sanction might long precede direct action.” Such negotiations rarely leave records. They form “the unseen iceberg to which riots were but the tip.”⁵¹

The January strike signalled an increase in militancy, the numbers of those involved and the construction of meaning to justify their struggle. Through their petition and mass assemblies, the gang-men were rehearsing and reiterating constructed narratives in the tradition of popular protest.⁵² Wakefield replied with a narrative of his own. Yet despite his reported calm during the January strike, the demonstration of workers power both frightened Wakefield and checked any cuts he may have planned. As his brother William reported to his Company superiors, “at the hint of any suggested reduction of wages, a general combination took place to oppose it.”⁵³ The organisation of the gang-men “rendered” it unsafe for the Company’s servants either to refuse to employ them or to make deductions from the stipulated wages for neglect or inefficiency.⁵⁴ It wasn’t until

mid-April 1843 that Arthur Wakefield was able to reduce rates to 18s per week without rations for the married, and 16s per week without rations for single men.⁵⁵

Nelson workers resisted in other ways. By January 1843, the wages offered by private employers had dropped to the same rates as those of the Company or in some cases were even less. Labourers not on public relief (around 100) enforced their own wage demands by threatening to take relief work.⁵⁶ Some did leave for the gangs – Company relief offered a working environment relatively free of supervision and safety from dismissal. Others left Nelson altogether.

Many gang-men ‘went ca’canny’ and instituted a go-slow by refusing to put in maximum effort. “The employment of men on public works has been for the last half year almost a farce” reported Tuckett in July, “especially since the reduction of wages. The turbulent, contumacious and indolent have openly obstructed and prevented the reputable and industrious labourers from doing their duty.”⁵⁷ The gang-men “considered the wages much less than they had a right to” complained William Wakefield, and “entered into extensive combinations not to give more work than they thought their weekly stipend was worth.”⁵⁸ One of the gangs never completed more than seven cubic yards per man per week, whereas the Company expected 60 cubic yards of work per man.⁵⁹ Stephens also blamed “disreputable characters”, but for one historian the system of weekly rates, “which made no distinction between the idle and the diligent, the skilled and the unskilled, all being paid the same wages whatever the amount of work done”, was the cause of both idleness and demoralisation.⁶⁰

By June 1843, Arthur Wakefield had tried and failed to break the power of the gangs. Although he managed to institute lower wages in April, his dispersal of the gangs across different areas of Nelson had little effect. His scheme to get men off the Company’s payroll by offering them a six-month contract of higher wages but with the requirement to give up reliance on the Company once completed also fell flat: “the terms he offered were contaminated by the doctrine that it was a great evil to allow labourers too easily to become landowners.”⁶¹ Then on 17 June Wakefield was killed during the Wairau Affray. Not only did it throw the town into panic and further labourers onto Company relief (many worked for the surveyors killed during the affray), it claimed one of the few Company officials the men respected.⁶² His successor, who was tasked with carrying out a major restructure of the gangs, was Frederick Tuckett.

Having been accused of cowardice for fleeing Wairau and rattled by the occupation of his office in July, Tuckett was in no state to deal with unruly gang-men. Stephens thought events had unhinged his mind. According to Allan, Tuckett’s “unfortunate manner made him generally unpopular” while his “overbearing tone” failed to mask his absolute fear of the gang-men, “so that he was despised as well as disliked.”⁶³ Tuckett hoped to break their organisation by offering piecework contracts and sections of land to wean them off relief; providing rations but not relief work to encourage the cultivation of land; offering certain mechanics free passages to Australia; and deporting 50 of the most disorderly.⁶⁴ Supervision was also to be increased. “In order to discourage idle habits” wrote William Wakefield, “I cannot too strongly recommend a vigilant superintendence and some examples by dismissal of those who will neither work fairly themselves nor permit their fellows to do so.”⁶⁵

On 14 August, Tuckett offered 38-year old surveyor and landowner Phillip Valle the position of superintendent. The position came with a salary of £200 (a weekly wage almost four times that of the gang-men) and a set of secret instructions. “It is proposed to place on the 21st instant under your control and inspection all the men who have not land in cultivation in other districts and to concentrate them in one force.”⁶⁶ Valle was to “become acquainted with the character of the men and you will mark such as are indolent, insolent and contumacious,

without however taking any immediate measures with them other than strictly deducting all loss of time... we shall get rid of the most troublesome characters and you will be in a position to offer as a boon to the remainder an arrangement by piecework.”⁶⁷ Tuckett also issued orders to John Swinton Spooner, the Surveyor of Public Works who until Valle’s appointment had compiled the pay lists and whose sympathies with the gang-men Tuckett believed “has done us more harm than good.”⁶⁸ The plan was consolidate the gangs at the swampy mudflats of Waimea East. They would come under the watchful eye of Valle and his two timekeepers, who would have the power to penalise slow gang-men. The rest of the dispersed gangs were to be consolidated and moved to Wai-iti Valley under the control of Spooner. The stage was now set for a major confrontation.

On 19 August, Tuckett trooped out to the Wai-iti Valley gang of John Sloss and told them to merge with the gang of John Spittal. The 20 gang-men rushed Tuckett “in the most violent manner”, made it clear they were not going anywhere for at least six months and sent him packing with curses.⁶⁹ Meanwhile, Spittal’s gang also refused to move. Relief work was not work, they argued, but “confinement to one place for eight or nine hours, and they meant it to last for twelve months more.”⁷⁰ The Motueka gang showered Tuckett “with the same spirit of violence and insubordination.”⁷¹ A shaken Tuckett hastily drew up a proclamation: any gang-man on the public works already cultivating their own land would be allowed rations to work exclusively on their land for the month of September. Although this was not sanctioned by Wakefield, Tuckett felt it was necessary “to prevent a general combination amongst the labourers to resist and defeat the contract of Mr. Valle.”⁷²

No proclamation could have helped Valle at that point, for he and his timekeepers had walked into a hornet’s nest of discontent. On Thursday 24 August, they made their way out to the three newly-consolidated gangs at the swampy ground of Waimea East, where at “three-quarters past 1PM, the men of Ryall’s [Roil’s] gang rose in open rebellion against me and the time keepers.”⁷³ Valle was threatened and pushed into a muddy ditch as gang-men lobbed stones at him, hitting him twice. Staggering out of the water, Valle’s attempts to reason were drowned “with groans and noise”, and he beat a desperate retreat to the gang of John Walker. Men from the gangs of Roil and Thomas Nock chased him through the swamp, and as Walker’s gang rested on their spades and watched, Valle and the timekeeper were forced to flee. Valle’s tent was destroyed in a final act of defiance.

According one gang-man the action had been planned. William Pratt joined the Waimea East gangs on 21 August and found them discussing “in no very complimentary terms” the new superintendent and his power “to deduct an hour from each man’s time who paused from work for a few minutes.”⁷⁴ Knowing Valle would be visiting soon, “there was some kind of understanding between a section of the men to be revenged upon him in some way”:

About the middle of the week he made his appearance, equipped in a pair of long boots and an eye-glass... As he neared the scene of operations, stepping nimbly from tussock to tussock, unfortunately for himself he first encountered the advanced guard of the party who had resolved to signalize the honour paid them by his visit. The first symptom of insubordination was by one of the men coolly surveying him in true theatrical style through a piece of flax, twisted up in the form of an eye-glass, and as this marked attention was not fully appreciated, but on the contrary provoked some threatening language, a number of the men immediately began to display great activity in tying flax together to form a rope, on perceiving which and divining something threatening in their looks and actions, he commenced a hasty retreat, not pausing this time to step from tussock to tussock, but plunging recklessly through the slough and water, followed by about 30 or 40 of the men.⁷⁵

Valle “either slipped, in his trepidation, or was pushed in, and for a minute or so was floundering in a very inglorious manner in a seven-foot ditch of very dirty water.”⁷⁶ It was not a great start for Valle, who was certain two-thirds of the men had banded together “to have all things their own way, for they laughed at the idea of there being any power here to control or punish them.”⁷⁷ Valle believed “a secret union does exist amongst them, in the proportion of five to one, for resisting all rules”, and told Tuckett that “under the present circumstances it would not be safe either for you or I to go amongst these men, nor indeed would I.” He quickly realised that piecework was the only way the Company would “get a fair amount of labour” out of those “who ought to have known the duty of their stations better.”⁷⁸

A wet and flustered Valle immediately reported the incident White. Although magistrate White was detested by the settler elite for his middle-class radicalism, his intellectual interest in democracy “was a world-view far removed from that of working men combining to fight for their livelihoods.”⁷⁹ According to Richard S. Hill, White’s “awareness of the implications of class struggle” meant he “was all the more determined to crush the Nelson workers.”⁸⁰ However his plan to enrol 25 special constables and march out to Waimea to arrest the ringleaders was deemed too risky by the timekeepers, who “thought it would be madness to attempt to take the men out there.”⁸¹ Besides, their class distance from the gang-men meant no one knew their names. White decided to wait until pay day, where he would nab them at the Company store.

As pay day drew near, White, Tuckett and Valle grew increasingly anxious. Rumours of armed revolt were about. White “received the most positive proof” that the gang-men were “administering oaths to one another... it appears that they anticipated some stoppage would be made from their wages and they expressed their determination to resist any such measure with force.”⁸² Although White knew “there are some very desperate men characters amongst the men who must be got rid of”, he doubted whether he had the means. When the 70-80 gang-men finally arrived at the Company store on Saturday 26 August, his doubts were violently confirmed.

The scene that morning was one “of disorder and impertinence” as Valle and White faced off against an armed throng of “very powerful men”, whose “dogged, reckless appearance gave the observer no reason to suppose they would stick at trifles.”⁸³ Valle tried to call up the men individually. They refused. When one finally came forward to receive the group’s pay, White pounced. As he attempted an arrest inside the Company store, the gang-man cried out, “come on my lads they are going to take me!”⁸⁴ The crowd smashed the office door, attacked White with heavy clubs and waving their guns, freed their comrade, yelling: “If you take one you might as well take all.”⁸⁵ White promptly gave up. The best he could do was ask Valle to point out his assailants and issue a feeble warning. “We would die sooner than submit ourselves to the Company’s regulations” they replied.⁸⁶ After forcing Valle to pay them, the gang-men formed themselves into a body, cried out marching orders and went off giving three cheers.

For the next week Nelson’s settlers were wild with alarm. Valle was livid. “The men have completely gained the upper hand” he wrote to Tuckett, angry that he’d been forced to pay the men in full. “Roil, the refractory overseer, I have also paid in full; and only wait for a time when it can be done safely, to break him.”⁸⁷ Meanwhile the gangs were in a state of mutiny and refused all inspection. Tuckett sent an urgent despatch to Wakefield offering his resignation and requesting troops: “if unprotected by a military or an alien force; [if] the payment of money to the men is withheld; the destruction of property, and in all probability of life which will ensue, will at once annihilate the settlement of Nelson.”⁸⁸ If troops couldn’t be spared then Tuckett suggested a force of special constables, “none of them to be of the labouring classes.”⁸⁹ White also rushed a letter to his superior in

Wellington, Major Richmond. As well as seeking advice on “how far after reading the Riot Act I should be justified in proceeding to extremities in case of personal violence”, White asked for troops. No settlers had dared to sign up as special constables and White felt he needed a military force to arrest the ringleaders. He also ordered jail cells to be built aboard the wreck of the *Fifeshire* beached at the mouth of Nelson Haven, for he doubted he could “keep off the people from a constant attempt at a rescue from our miserable apology for a Gaol.”⁹⁰

The following weekend the homes of several gang-men were raided and between five and eight of them were arrested.⁹¹ On 4 September they were hauled before the magistrates. But a hostile crowd of around 40-armed gang-men besieged the courthouse. White warned the accused that liberating a prisoner merited the punishment of transportation, but as there was confusion around their identities he was not only forced to dismiss the charges, he also paid them and their comrades the wages they had lost for appearing in court!⁹²

“In the present disorganised state of the settlement and the present means at the disposal of the magistrates” wrote White, “it is folly to attempt to carry the law into effect – persons and property are not safe here.”⁹³ Smarting at his inability to break the power of the gang-men, all White could do was hope for military aid and “endeavour to keep the present state of things here as much as possible from appearing in the newspaper.”⁹⁴ He failed at that too. The sham trial “was all fudge” cried the *Nelson Examiner*, incredulous that no punishment had been meted out. “Thus we are blessed with two privileged classes – Maories [sic] and road-makers.”⁹⁵ Having defeated the Company’s scheme of supervision and extinguished the magisterial authority of White, the gang-men were now complete masters of the settlement.⁹⁶

II

Dinah Clark was from Yorkshire, and Yorkshire people had a reputation for straight talking (“as blunt as a shovel” is how some people put it).⁹⁷ On 10 September 1835, the determined and sometimes-impulsive 19-year old married agricultural labourer Charles Clark at lunchtime and returned to work at the local woollen mill that afternoon. Dinah and Charles were among the *Indus* passengers to Nelson that protested their onboard conditions, and family lore says it was Dinah who had Charles change his occupation from ‘labourer’ to ‘sawyer’ before arriving in February 1843.⁹⁸ By July, Charles had joined the Brook Street gang to earn relief wages and rations and was in the thick of the action at Waimea East.

As Dinah and Charles were arriving in Nelson, 20-year old Elizabeth Rowbotham (nee Waterhouse) was about to give birth to her first child, having miscarried aboard the *Martha Ridgway* a year earlier. Born into a family of itinerant power-loom weavers, Elizabeth grew up across the Greater Manchester and Cheshire counties as her father Thomas Waterhouse moved from mill to mill for work.⁹⁹ Two weeks before the Waterhouse family left Cheshire for Nelson, Elizabeth married agricultural labourer James Rowbotham of Werneth, a small Cheshire town surrounded by steam-powered cotton mills and grimy print works. Although the Rowbotham’s were not as impoverished as others in Werneth, they shared the common plight of partial employment and having to receive parish poor relief to pay the rent.¹⁰⁰ In Nelson, Elizabeth’s father Thomas was on the Company’s Waimea Road gang throughout 1843, and with a six-month old baby at home, James joined his father-in-law on the gangs in August. Both men were in the Waimea East gangs that rose in open rebellion (to quote Valle) and both were marked as absent on 4 September, which suggests they attended court in solidarity with their fellows.¹⁰¹

Mary Ann Hodgkinson, a framework knitter and mother of three from Nottinghamshire, was one of E.P. Thompson’s poor stockings. As capital centralised framework knitting into highly-supervised and increasingly-mechanised factories, the cost of renting frames skyrocketed and wages dwindled. Some framework knitters were left so impoverished that according to Mary Ann, “unfortunate people traipsed the roads barefoot, and some even died by the wayside.”¹⁰² It wasn’t for nothing that the Luddite movement was born in Nottingham two decades earlier. Destroying frames was one working-class response to what Peter Linebaugh calls enclosure of the hand.¹⁰³ Another was the art of making shift, a combination of survival strategies that ranged from mutual aid and migration to theft and illicit smuggling. This economy of makeshifts was often a gendered one, carried out by kin and community networks of working-class women. It was sorely needed, for Mary Ann’s husband German (or Germain in some accounts) was an agricultural labourer that struggled to find full-time work. After enduring “the long dark nights and never-ending roar of the sea”, the Hodgkinson’s arrived in Nelson on 25 October 1842. There, Mary Ann drew on her class experience of making shift and the material practices of local Māori to forge what Harman calls hybrid domesticity.¹⁰⁴ This unwaged work was essential to both survival and the reproduction of labour power in the form of German’s ability to work. He joined the same Waimea East gang as James Rowbotham in August 1843.

The stories of Dinah, Elizabeth and Mary Ann remind us that the Nelson gang-men were never alone in their struggles – even if women were not visibly present – and that it is unwise to analyse gender and class separately from each other. Their pasts also point to shared experiences of proletarian life in England. Making shift was part of a larger working-class repertoire, forged as customary practices and the moral economy clashed with the intensification of capitalist relations, time-discipline and the market imperative. As Raewyn Dalziel illustrated for 1840s New Plymouth, the “cultural baggage of the emigrants contained not only religious beliefs, a political and legal system, literature, art and music, but also a set of popular values and a repertoire of popular protest”:

When confronted on the voyage and in the settlement with what they believed to be infractions of community standards, infringements of their rights and liberties, and the breakdown of contractual obligations, the emigrants responded in customary ways. This can be seen most clearly in the early 1840s when broken promises, economic hardship and social tensions reproduced some of the conditions of the 'old world'. The responses were correspondingly 'old world'.¹⁰⁵

This is equally true of Nelson. Between April 1843, when pay lists of the gangs were consolidated and regularly compiled to the events of August and September 1843, at least 390 men had been on Company relief and far from the dreams that had carried them there.¹⁰⁶ Gang-men included Edward Baigent, who later became the region's most successful saw-miller and an MP; William Jessop, a bricklayer from Norfolk who in 1837 had written a stirring letter to the English Poor Law Commission, claiming "we are Labouring under the Galling yoke of Oppression and poverty from want of imployment"; agricultural labourer John Spittal, whose Wai-iti Valley gang fought the consolidation of the gangs; and John Sloss, a 32-year old farm labourer from who led the second Wai-iti Valley gang and who died in Nelson gaol in 1856 after "A Visitation from God - Insanity."¹⁰⁷

Unrest against the Company was wider than the three gangs of Waimea East. But as they were at the forefront of the events of August and September 1843, they are the focus of this section. Using Company pay lists, emigration registers and family history sources, an analysis of the 70-odd gang-men of Waimea East sheds light on their backgrounds and their repertoire of tactics.

Although the three large gangs were formed and dispatched to the swampy, mud-ridden flats of Waimea East on 21 August, many of the men had already toiled together for months on the Waimea Road and Waimea Harbour Road gangs. For them, the disruption of established bonds and working rhythms caused by the re-organisation of the gangs, coupled with the threat of increased supervision and loss of autonomy, contributed to their grievances. For those new to Waimea like James Rowbotham and German Hodgkinson, the wet, swampy conditions may have also been a factor. In the days leading up to the events of late August, Nelson was lashed by storms and heavy rain. Stephen's dairy records rain on 13, 14 and 15 August, and downpours on the evening of 24 August—the day Valle was dunked. The stormy weather continued into September: "on these occasions we are sufficiently miserable."¹⁰⁸ William Pratt, who had only recently joined the Waimea East gangs, recalled the difficult conditions:

On arriving on Monday morning at the scene of our future work, I found several gangs of men concentrated upon one spot, which from the limited out-look afforded me, standing as I was knee deep in water in a dense mass of bulrushes, which reached far above my head, I judged to be near the centre of a large swamp; we had had to scramble for about a quarter of a mile through the rushes and slough to reach this position.¹⁰⁹

The work itself was heavy and miles away from their homes. For gang-men without labouring or agricultural backgrounds, the toil of cutting flax, digging drains and moving dirt with crude spades, picks and shovels would have been a rude and demoralising experience. Of course, causality can't be reduced solely to working conditions. "It is not perhaps the working conditions per se that threaten workers" but "the never-ending need to ferret out the means to assure their sustenance."¹¹⁰ Rain just made a despairing situation worse.

William Pratt had joined the gang led by Thomas Nock, a bricklayer from Staffordshire. Like Nock himself, the gang included people who had protested their conditions aboard the *Indus*: Adin Cockroft, Elisha Round, Dinah's husband Charles Clark, and Henry James. John Perry Robinson was also in this gang. Some were agricultural labourers like Alexander Fisher, who in 1844 found himself in Nelson Gaol (ironically, his punishment was government labour on a work gang). John Batt and his wife Ann applied for passage to New Zealand during the English winter of 1841/1842. They struggled in Nelson. After their daughter Mary was born in 1843 their home burnt down. The 1849 census notes that John was working as a tenant farmer on leased land—it was only in 1861 that they could afford to buy 33 acres of land from Reverend Charles Saxton, an absentee landowner for almost 20 years.¹¹¹ Agricultural labourer Job Aldridge was hit hard by the bankruptcy of the Company in 1844. Having relied heavily on relief work, by 1848 he was declared a confused, sick pauper with an injured leg and no visible means of support, although he seems to have recovered somewhat by the 1850s.¹¹²

TABLE 1. Gang of Thomas Knock – Waimea East

Name	Age	Occupation	From	Ship	M/S	PL
Aldridge, Job	26	Agricultural Labourer	Blewbury, Berkshire	<i>Mary Ann</i>	M	15
Batt, John*	26	Agricultural Labourer	Barton, Hampshire	<i>Olympus</i>	M	8
Barber, Walter*	20	Sawyer	Rastrick, West Yorkshire	<i>Indus</i>	M	6
Booth, Charles*	37	Warehouseman & Gardener	Carrington Street, Nottingham	<i>Sir Charles Forbes</i>	M	9
Clark, Charles	25	Sawyer [Agricultural Labourer]	Halifax, West Yorkshire	<i>Indus</i>	M	6
Cockroft, Adin*	24	Butcher & Farmer	Halifax, West Yorkshire	<i>Indus</i>	M	16
Coster, Charles	18	Farm Labourer	Stepney, London, Middlesex	<i>George Fyfe</i>	S	6
Edwards, James (1)	25	Gardener	Golden Square, London, Middlesex	<i>Thomas Harrison</i>	M	6
Edwards, James (2)	32	Carpenter & Joiner	Chelsea, London, Middlesex	<i>Olympus</i>	M	6
Fieldes, William*	30	Sawyer	Shoddesden, Hampshire	<i>Lord Auckland</i>	M	3
Fisher, Alexander	34	Agricultural Labourer	Kettins, Kinross, Scotland	<i>New Zealand</i>	M	17
Hunter, Robert (1)	34	Mechanic [Watchmaker]	Stirling, Stirlingshire, Scotland	<i>New Zealand</i>	M	3
Hunter, Robert (2)	35	Sawyer	Dundee, Angus, Scotland	<i>New Zealand</i>	M	3
Jackson, Thomas (1)*	24	Bootmaker	Soho, London, Middlesex	<i>Sir Charles Forbes</i>	M	11
Jackson, Thomas (2)*	30	Farm Servant	Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Scotland	<i>New Zealand</i>	M	11
James, Henry	34	Cooper	Redditch, Worcestershire	<i>Indus</i>	M	14
Knapp, James*	21	Labourer	Ramsbury Hills, Wiltshire	<i>Olympus</i>	M	17
Maher, Michael*	46	Ploughman	County Tipperary, Ireland	<i>Lord Auckland</i>	M	14
Mayo, Thomas	22	Ironmonger's Labourer	Sherborne, Dorset	<i>Thomas Harrison</i>	M	15
Moulder, George*	37	Sawyer	Aldbury, Hertfordshire	<i>Sir Charles Forbes</i>	M	14
Nock, David	12	Boy	Horsley Heath, Tipton, Staffordshire	<i>Indus</i>	S	5
Nock, Thomas	38	Bricklayer	Horsley Heath, Tipton, Staffordshire	<i>Indus</i>	M	5
Pratt, William	19	Shipwright Apprentice	London, Middlesex	<i>Indus</i>	S	1
Richardson, William	37	Agricultural Labourer	Ludgershall, Wiltshire	<i>Fifeshire</i>	M	14
Robinson, John Perry*	33	Turner & Wheelwright	Birmingham, Warwickshire	<i>Phoebe</i>	M	13
Round, Elisha	20	Blacksmith & Shoer of Horses	Great Bridge, Tipton, Staffordshire	<i>Indus</i>	M	3
Vallance, Henry*	28	Bricklayer	Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Scotland	<i>New Zealand</i>	M	4

* Absent (at court) on 4 September 1843. M/S: Married or Single. PL: Number of times recorded on weekly pay lists, 22 April – 9 September 1843

Working in the gang of John Walker were the husbands of Mary Ann and Elizabeth, German Hodgkinson and James Rowbotham. Other agricultural labourers included Thomas Kite. With his wife Lucy, Thomas founded the 'Plough Inn', the 'Red Horse' and the 'White Hart', all popular hotels in Richmond.¹¹³ His brother William achieved a different kind of popularity for having adulterous relations with the wife of Thomas Gibbs. When Thomas was found dead at the bottom of a well with a slit throat, William was the prime suspect – until the coroner ruled that Thomas had taken his own life.¹¹⁴ As well as labourers such as William Kite, the gang had a high number of masons and quarrymen. Walker himself had helped Thomas Brunner with surveying work in

Motueka, cutting tōi and rods for thatching. William Andrews, a mason and strong Wesleyan from Somerset, later established a farm at Wakefield, where he ploughed his first acres with a team of goats as bullocks were beyond his means. Religion also played an important role in the life of ‘Bishop’ John Mears, an evangelist-type who walked hundreds of miles to take church services across the region. Notably, this gang had the least number of gang men absent on 4 September, during the trial of the so-called ringleaders.

TABLE 2. *Gang of John Walker – Waimea East*

Name	Age	Occupation	From	Ship	M/S	PL
Andrews, William	42	Mason & Quarryman	Twerton, Somerset	<i>Bolton</i>	M	1
Clark, Joseph	26	Farm Servant	Knock of Alves, Morayshire, Scotland	<i>Olympus</i>	M	3
Donald, Douglas	31	Blacksmith	Greenock, Renfrewshire, Scotland	<i>New Zealand</i>	M	9
Eyles, William*	20	Agricultural Labourer	Lasham, Hampshire	<i>Mary Ann</i>	S	11
George, Thomas	28	Agricultural Labourer	Monmouth, Wales	<i>Martha Ridgway</i>	M	9
Goodman, Thomas	22	Gardener & Labourer	St Mary, Nottinghamshire	<i>Phoebe</i>	M	12
Hammond, Richard (1)	32	Mechanic	Leeds, Yorkshire	<i>Phoebe</i>	M	12
Hammond, Richard (2)	26	Agricultural Labourer	Bradford, West Yorkshire	<i>George Fyfe</i>	M	12
Hewitt, John	35	Currier & Farmer	Pentridge, Staffordshire	<i>Prince of Wales</i>	M	15
Higgins, William*	36	Sawyer	Bath, Somerset	<i>Clifford</i>	M	3
Hodgkinson, German	31	Agricultural Labourer	Hilltop, Eastwood, Nottinghamshire	<i>Thomas Harrison</i>	M	2
Ireland, William	28	Stonemason	Edinburgh, Midlothian, Scotland	<i>New Zealand</i>	M	10
Kate, William	44	Agricultural Labourer	Alton, Hampshire	<i>Bolton</i>	M	3
Kite, Thomas	38	Agricultural Labourer	Ettington, Warwickshire	<i>Phoebe</i>	M	10
Kite, William	26	Agricultural Labourer	Ettington, Warwickshire	<i>Thomas Harrison</i>	M	11
Matthew, Daniel*	23	Agricultural Labourer	Alton, Hampshire	<i>Mary Ann</i>	S	17
Mears, John	39	Agricultural Labourer	Stapenhill, Derbyshire	<i>London</i>	M	17
Nicol, Enoch	33	Mason	Manchester, Lancashire	<i>Martha Ridgway</i>	M	11
Richardson, James*	24	Agricultural Labourer	Brede, East Sussex	<i>Mary Ann</i>	M	13
Rowbotham, James*	21	Farmer [Agricultural Labourer]	Werneth, Cheshire	<i>Martha Ridgway</i>	M	4
Walker, John	39	Quarryman	Keswick, Cumberland	<i>Thomas Harrison</i>	M	17
Warner, Richard	23	Quarryman & Blacksmith	Ore, Hastings, East Sussex	<i>Olympus</i>	M	12
Watts, John*	33	Blacksmith & Shoer of Horses	Dundee, Angus, Scotland	<i>New Zealand</i>	M	4

* Absent (at court) on 4 September 1843. M/S: Married or Single. PL: Number of times recorded on weekly pay lists, 22 April – 9 September 1843

Thomas Dangerfield Roil and his gang, however, had no such qualms. A labourer who’d worked the hop gardens of Alton, Roil’s gang had the highest proportion of fellow agricultural labourers and the most attendees at the 4 September court session. It had more Irish gang-men than any other gang, such as Cornelius Dwyer and his son John, and the Mullin brothers from County Donegal. It was also the most seasoned gang, with all but three gang-men having laboured on the public works for over four weeks. There were men with past and future criminal records, men who had experienced violence and men fingered as ringleaders by Company officials.

TABLE 3. *Gang of Thomas Roil – Waimea East*

Name	Age	Occupation	From	Ship	M/S	PL
Andrews, Charles	21	Mason & Quarryman	Twerton, Somerset	<i>Bolton</i>	M	11
Bampton, George*	24	Gardener	Eton, West Windsor, Berkshire	<i>Bombay</i>	M	5
Blincoe, Francis	46	Agricultural Labourer	Clewer Fields, Windsor, Berkshire	<i>Clifford</i>	M	4
Burt, William	21	Agricultural Labourer	Launceston, Cornwall	<i>Bombay</i>	M	3
Calman, David*	28	Carpenter	Westminster, London, Middlesex	<i>Lord Auckland</i>	M	15
Connor, Owen	23	Farm Servant	Newport, Monmouthshire	<i>Lord Auckland</i>	M	14
Croake, Patrick*	37	Agricultural Labourer	Crookstown, County Kildare, Ireland	<i>Bombay</i>	M	9
Dwyer, Cornelius*	46	Agricultural Labourer	Bromkeen, County Limerick, Ireland	<i>Prince of Wales</i>	M	11
Dwyer, John	15	Ploughboy	Bromkeen, County Limerick, Ireland	<i>Prince of Wales</i>	S	8

Egginton, John*	36	Farm Labourer	Woodsley, Leeds, West Yorkshire	<i>Martha Ridgway</i>	M	16
Flanigan, Dominick	41	Agricultural Labourer	Whitecross St., London, Middlesex	<i>Lord Auckland</i>	M	14
Gay, John	24	Farm Labourer	Holt, Wiltshire	<i>Bolton</i>	M	3
Hartley, Richard	24	Mason & Bricklayer	Bowling, Yorkshire	<i>Phoebe</i>	M	15
Harvey, Thomas*	32	Stonemason	Belfast, Northern Ireland	<i>Phoebe</i>	M	5
Ives, William*	32	Shoemaker & Farmer's Man	Denner Hill, Buckinghamshire	<i>Sir Charles Forbes</i>	M	12
Lusty, Benjamin	22	Carpenter & Joiner	Gloucestershire	<i>Clifford</i>	M	11
Mears, William	15	Labourer	Burton Upon Trent, Staffordshire	<i>London</i>	S	16
Mullin, Michael*	30	Labourer	Shannagh, County Donegal, Ireland	<i>Prince of Wales</i>	S	10
Mullin, Richard*	28	Labourer	Shannagh, County Donegal, Ireland	<i>Prince of Wales</i>	S	13
Nesbit, William*	22	Boilermaker & Smith	Newcastle Upon Tyne	<i>Phoebe</i>	M	17
Nixon, John	43	Agricultural Labourer	Ireby Low, Cumberland	<i>Lord Auckland</i>	M	14
Parker, James	41	Sawyer	Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Scotland	<i>New Zealand</i>	M	16
Pearman, Richard*	26	Bricklayer	Haringey, London, Middlesex	<i>Bolton</i>	M	17
Roil, Thomas*	45	Agricultural Labourer	Alton, Hampshire	<i>Bolton</i>	M	16
Telford, William*	32	Sawyer & Bricklayer	Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Scotland	<i>New Zealand</i>	M	16
Tutty, John*	24	Bread & Biscuit Maker	Hastings, East Sussex	<i>Sir Charles Forbes</i>	M	12
Waterhouse, Thomas*	43	Labourer	Newton, Cheshire	<i>Martha Ridgway</i>	M	17
Woodward, Robert*	24	Blacksmith	Marylebone, London, Middlesex	<i>Olympus</i>	M	15

* Absent (at court) on 4 September 1843. M/S: Married or Single. PL: Number of times recorded on weekly pay lists, 22 April – 9 September 1843

George Bampton had been at the scene of the Wairau Affray. Having survived the violence and escaped to tell a vivid tale of the event, he found himself working on the gangs soon after. After the financial collapse of the Company in 1844, Owen Connor, an Irish-born farm servant from Newport, Monmouthshire, was convicted and sentenced to ten year's transportation for killing a bullock. In the end his sentence was commuted to hard labour, much to the dismay of the *Nelson Examiner*. Connor "was notorious as one of the most turbulent of the Company's workmen; one of the principal ringleaders in the riots."¹¹⁵ Then there was Richard Pearman, whose violence towards his wife Mary caused a scene in January 1844. After barricading himself inside the Company's barracks and threatening a constable with a loaded gun, he was sentenced to 12 months imprisonment for assault.¹¹⁶ James Parker was found not guilty of stabbing his brother-in-law in 1851; a John Tutty was convicted and eventually acquitted for killing lambs and stealing their carcasses in 1878.¹¹⁷

Others had a history of poverty and crime long before arriving in New Zealand. In 1834, 1836 and again in 1838, agricultural labourer Francis Blincoe was in and out of work, jail and the local workhouse for various petty crimes. They included robbery, desertion (leaving his family to be cared for by the parish as he sought work), refusing workhouse labour, swearing at the workhouse master and assault.¹¹⁸ In fact Blincoe and his family missed their original sailing to Nelson because Francis was in Reading Gaol – he'd robbed the Windsor Union Workhouse:

Francis Blincoe, labourer, aged 45, was charged with having, on the 18th of April inst., stolen from the Old Workhouse in Sheet-street one fustain coat, one fustain vest, two gowns, and other articles together of the value of 12s, the property of the guardians of the poor of the Windsor Union... The court in addressing the prisoner said that in consequence of the time which had elapsed since his former conviction, and it appearing on the records of the court that he had not been before him since that period, he could not pass the sentence of transportation to which he had subjected himself, but he should order him to be confined in the County gaol for six months with hard labour."¹¹⁹

Blincoe had narrowly missed transportation as a convict to Australia. Instead, the family came to Nelson. "Francis may have been a bit of a rough character" wrote one descendant. "In 1845 he was fined 10s for being drunk and

£2 for assaulting one John Greenwood. In 1849 he was again fined 5s. for being drunk but complaints against him for cattle trespass (in 1846) and indebtedness (in 1848) were dismissed.”¹²⁰

The lack of names and arrest warrants makes it impossible to say with any certainty who the ringleaders charged on 4 September 1843 were. There are gaping holes in the Nelson magistrate records, and it’s not clear whether the 36 men identified as being at the courthouse included those facing charges (Owen Connor has no asterisk beside his name, for example). It’s tempting to see John Perry Robinson as one. An experienced Chartist and public speaker who was in court that day, could he have lent those skills to the struggle despite later downplaying the use of weapons? Maybe he saw himself as a moral leader but disagreed with or failed to control the more violent gang-men? It’s also tempting to see those with experience of criminality as ringleaders. But while the boundary between crime, poverty and social protest was blurry in the nineteenth century, the authors of *Albion’s Fatal Tree* remind us to be wary of “a Manichaeist approach in which there were ‘good’ criminals, who are premature revolutionaries or reformers, forerunners of popular movements’ and the bad who committed crime without qualification.”¹²¹

The experiences of a few individuals are not representative of a larger collective, or of collective action. The working-class emigrants to Nelson had varied pasts and equally varied futures. Yet some tentative observations can be drawn about the Waimea East gang men. Their average age was 30, with David Knock, the son of Thomas Nock, being the youngest at age 12. Some of them were related, friends, or from the same counties and parishes, and had experienced acts of protest and solidarity during their passage to New Zealand. Counter to the image of riotous unmarried men, only nine of the 74 gang men were single. And most of them had been supporting their wives and children with relief work for a considerable time: 16 had less than four week’s experience of the gangs, 18 had been gang-men for five to ten weeks, while 44 had laboured on the gangs for 11 weeks or more. Their past relationship to the wage was overwhelmingly agricultural, with most having worked as agricultural labourers, farm servants or in other forms of rural work (although this must be treated with caution, for as we have already seen, some gang-men changed their occupations before emigrating). Most were from England, although many had likely come from other places. For example, Owen Connor was born in Ireland but was last working in Monmouthshire, Wales.

England (58): Middlesex (9), Yorkshire (7), Hampshire (6), Staffordshire (3), East Sussex (3), Berkshire (3), Wiltshire (3), Somerset (3), Nottinghamshire (3), Buckinghamshire (3), Warwickshire (3), Cheshire (2), Cumberland (2), Cornwall (1), Derbyshire (1), Dorset (1), Gloucestershire (1), Hertfordshire (1), Lancashire (1), Newcastle Upon Tyne (1), Worcestershire (1). **Scotland (11):** Lanarkshire (4), Angus (2), Kinross (1), Midlothian (1), Morayshire (1), Renfrewshire (1), Stirlingshire (1). **Ireland (7):** County Donegal (2), County Limerick (2), County Tipperary (1), County Kildare (1), Belfast (1). **Wales (2):** Monmouthshire (2).

Some were from industrial towns, including hotbeds of Chartism and working-class unrest. John Perry Robinson was from Birmingham and William Higgins was from Bath, both centres of proletarian struggle. John Gay and at least three other emigrant families were from Holt, a village that held large Chartist meetings.¹²² Family stories of Nelson emigrants being involved in Welsh Chartist agitation have survived, and in the case of Owen Connor the connection is tantalising. Owen and his wife Mary were married in Newport, Monmouthshire, not long after the Newport Rising of November 1839 – one of the largest armed risings in Britain’s recent history. Owen may or may not have been one of the 10,000 armed marchers involved in the bloody street battles that November,

but the political and social ramifications swirled for years after and it would have been impossible not to have been affected by them.¹²³

Recent scholarship on eighteenth and nineteenth century popular protest warns against sharp divides between urban and rural worlds and their struggles. “The economies of town and countryside were far from being polar opposites. In many eighteenth-century villages agriculture and industrial production existed cheek by jowl”, and tactics associated with agrarian conflict – arson, threatening letters, machine-breaking – were readily used alongside urban political reform.¹²⁴ Still, the agricultural background of many of the gang-men suggests their experience in Nelson would have been shaped by both covert and overt forms of agrarian conflict, as well as significant rural movements such as the Swing Riots of 1830/31.

A series of revolts by impoverished agricultural labourers against the introduction of threshing machines, Swing also included agitation for better wages, adequate poor relief and lower tithes. Riots and incendiarism swung across the southern and eastern counties of England and back again, fanned by a rural proletariat facing a poor harvest, a swollen labour market and very little means to survive besides poor relief. As Katrina Navickas notes, Swing was “a complex, multi-faceted series of outbreaks of rural agitation” within long-term patterns of tension and unrest, with “regionally specific and economic contexts.”¹²⁵ Repression and the forced transportation of many Swing rioters helped quell the unrest, but not the conditions that had caused it. In 1835, arson and protest in the Swing counties flared up again.¹²⁶

Dakin’s study of the Company’s working-class emigrants in Wellington, Nelson and New Plymouth found a high proportion were from Swing counties. Of the 449 emigrants from Kent, 226 came from parishes heavily involved in the revolt, while a further 170 emigrants from Sussex, Hampshire, Wiltshire and Somerset also came from affected parishes.¹²⁷ Waimea East gang-men James Richardson, Richard Warner and James Tutty came from an area of East Sussex that was central to Swing. Richardson’s village of Brede, for example, witnessed tumultuous assemblies of agricultural labourers who then launched “a local movement against the overseers of the poor that assumed considerable proportions.”¹²⁸ The 37-year old William Richardson of Ludgershall, Wiltshire could not have missed the explosive riots that overtook his parish or the labourers of his village that participated in the destruction of threshing machines – if he wasn’t involved himself. As the county with the highest number of destroyed machines, a score of Wiltshire labourers appear in the indictments, including the surname Knapp – a possible family connection to Waimea East gang-man James Knapp, an agricultural labourer from Ramsbury Hills.¹²⁹ In Alton, Hampshire – the village of agricultural labourers William Kate, Daniel Matthew and the ‘refractory’ Thomas Roil – a body of men had smashed a number of threshing machines, extorted money from a farmer and destroyed his furniture after being fired upon.¹³⁰ In Henry James’ village of Redditch, Worcestershire, workers destroyed four needle-stamps and presses; in William Burt’s home of Launceston, Cornwall, there were wages riots and the writing of threatening letters.¹³¹

Swing remained “a powerful metonym associated with various forms of rural resistance into the later 1830s.”¹³² The area around Brede, for example, continued to be a centre of agrarian dissent throughout the decade. There, the rural proletariat formed groups like ‘The United Brothers of Industry’ and ‘The Agricultural Labourers’ Conjunction Union Friendly Society’, and in late 1835 continued to march, petition and invade overseers’ offices.¹³³ Yet even if the gang-men and their wives were not directly touched by Swing, argues Dakin, “the memory of that revolt and the harsh repression that ensued would still have been vivid in many of the villages from which emigrants to New Zealand came.”¹³⁴ Alfred Saunders remembered the “poor, hungry, uneducated farm labourers of Wiltshire” taking part in Swing. “The last winter that I was a boarder with Mr S. in the

parsonage house on the high ground, I often saw hay or corn stacks burning in the evening on the high hills and downs.”¹³⁵ Sarah Pratt was the wife of gang-man William Pratt, and like James Knapp, was from Ramsbury in Wiltshire. She recalled how when threshing “machinery was introduced which threw a great many men out of work and riots became frequent, the men were determined to break all the machines.”¹³⁶ As a special constable, her father “knew a great many of the labourers and took some of them to Salisbury Gaol... they were very calm in their despair.”¹³⁷ Sarah was fascinated with the soldiers billeted in their village, running alongside them as they marched and drilled. Only later did she realise they were there to quell the riots.

Such a landmark series of revolts were hard to forget. However, focusing too much on Swing runs the risk of segregating “discrete and extraordinary events and personalities from the thicker web of experiences and social relations of the everyday.”¹³⁸ Indeed, the “banal image of the bucolic farmyard camouflages the endemic tensions and structural conflict” that made up the daily experience of the agricultural labourer.¹³⁹ The repertoire of tactics used by the Nelson gang-men were no doubt shaped by their experience of popular protest, but also by other customs and the specific nature of their work. Agricultural labour featured a range of roles and hierarchies, overlaid with class antagonisms and a shared experience of exploitation. Gang-men would have experienced at least “two or perhaps three types of organised collective activity: for labour, for ritual purposes, and perhaps for certain customary functions of the entire village such as beating the bounds.”¹⁴⁰ This included co-operative work at harvest time, which sometimes included the democratic election of a ‘Lord’, ‘Captain’ or ‘Lady’ to give leadership to the work and to receive payment on behalf of the collective. It also included outdoor relief schemes.

The use of work gangs as outdoor relief had increased in many English counties after 1814, especially in the southern and eastern counties where many of the Nelson gang-men were from. Set up to cope with the high unemployment levels amongst the agricultural workforce, men and women on poor relief found themselves labouring on road gangs, quarrying parties and parish gangs for general farm work. The gangs not only emphasised their common plight, but in the minds of the parish providers of relief, provided fertile fields for the workers to “corrupt one another” and listen “to every bad advice” free of supervision.¹⁴¹ After the introduction of the New Poor Laws in 1835, overt protest over parish relief – including riots, violence, large assemblies and arson – increased dramatically. Alongside these were the less-overt micro-politics of poor relief provision. As the example of Francis Blincoe shows, the welfare process involved protracted and often antagonistic negotiations all too familiar to many of the gang-men and their wives.¹⁴²

Writing about work gangs in East Sussex, Roger Wells notes how late starters or those that failed to dig a certain quota of stone per week lost a whole day’s pay. The respectable were encouraged to report “all Persons employed by the Parish seen loitering and idling their time during the hours they ought to be at work.”¹⁴³ The Nelson gang-men’s ability force the pace of work and their attack on Valle prevented such unwanted developments, and formed a continuum of protest aimed at controlling the delivery of parish relief. Even dunking Valle in a ditch had a tradition. In Lancashire, throwing blacklegs into muddy ditches was a well-known custom.

In the 1820s and 1830s – like in Nelson in 1843 – there were few institutional forms of collective bargaining or organs of conciliation and arbitration to defuse conflict.¹⁴⁴ In such situations, writes Clover, “it is inevitable that tactics will proliferate as people try solutions to a new set of problems, borrowing their forms from the old repertoire.”¹⁴⁵ Marching and assembling in large groups was one of them. As Navickas notes, both urban and rural labourers “had long asserted their control over the streets through parading and marching. The tactic was

a performance of solidarity against their employers and the government's restrictions on their right to combine."¹⁴⁶ Marching on the Company store drew on such experiences, as did the storming of the store itself. Working-class communities had long resisted impressment, especially men forced into seafaring by naval press gangs. It was common for crowds of women and men to enforce "community justice against state compulsion by attacking the rendezvous-houses to release the impressed."¹⁴⁷ And as already mentioned, invading overseers' offices was also a common occurrence.

As Dalziel notes, petitioning had a long history in England.¹⁴⁸ Unsurprisingly, it formed an important part of Nelson's micro-politics. The Company archives contain numerous letters of protest, ranging from the passengers of the *Phoebe* to the formal Petition of the Working Men of Nelson. Like the January strike, the riotous occupation of Tuckett's office in July 1843 was also preceded by a petition. Written and signed by thirty Brook Street Valley gang-men, it petitioned against the change from weekly to fortnightly payments. As "working men many of us having large families [we] find it difficult to procure food for the wages we receive for one week", and they feared "our children will have to go without food."¹⁴⁹

The armed attack on Tuckett in July 1843 and the riotous assembly of 26 August was therefore "argument continued by other means."¹⁵⁰ The gang-men's recourse to rioting formed part of an ongoing contest of wills and power with the Company. And while riots over the moral economy, such as setting the price of grain, had almost disappeared in England by the 1840s, custom continued to inform the Nelson gang-men's sense of the right to poor relief and to a fair wage.¹⁵¹

As well as customary tactics, the gang-men's strategies of resistance were shaped by a relatively new element (at least to them): the space and place that was Nelson. The Petition of the Working Men of Nelson hints at the spatial dimension of their revolt, as do accounts of the swampy conditions at Waimea East. The newly-erected structures of Pākehā Nelson became contested sites of power: the roads the gang-men cleared with their calloused hands and then marched upon with their guns and clubs; the brickfield that hosted their mass assemblies; and the Company store they stormed and occupied, located as it was below the ostentatious home of Arthur Wakefield. These mixed with the contested power relations between Māori and the Company, reified in blood at Wairau. Nelson in 1843 was a violent place. With this came a plethora of emotions, an important factor in any collective action:

Historians and sociologists previously dismissed emotion, rumour and popular imagination as irrational as they sought to emphasise how crowds took decisions based on careful consideration of the economic situation or political opportunities. More recent scholars of social movements have argued that emotions and rationality are not mutually exclusive: crowds were not irrational 'mobs' but neither did they coldly calculate every move in the light of hard 'evidence'... fear was an important facilitator for shaping both a movement and the authorities' reaction to collective action.¹⁵²

Many emigrants would have been invested in the Wakefield scheme, through personal ties to recruiting agents or the desire to make a new life. Confronting the possibility of failure, starvation, or worse would have stirred deeply emotional responses.¹⁵³ Fear, disappointment, anger, pride, hopelessness, hope – a range of feelings were folded into the fabric of the gang-men's revolt, weaved together with the emotional support of their wives and the desire to make meaning of their situation.

Class relations and their antagonisms are corporeal; the response to them equally so. Living on rations and whatever else could be raised, many of the gang-men would have been constantly hungry. They were body-tired from their travel to and from work. They were tired of the work itself. And some gang-men simply didn't want to work at all. Relief work wasn't work, they said, and they made sure of it by going-slow. Others did not share the same dreams for land or labour and were happy to ride the Company for all it was worth. As late as April 1844, Company officials were complaining of idleness on the gangs, incredulous that some gang-men refused opportunities to earn piecework rates and cultivate land.¹⁵⁴ These were not the cherished pioneer colonists of our history books, but common people seeking to escape the very thing that had shaped their proletarian bodies/lives, both in Nelson and before: work.

The motivations of any crowd in protest can be as complex as the crowd itself. Yet as I hope this tentative research shows, the emigrant labourers' shared experience of popular protest and custom provided a compass for navigating their new situation. Their actions may have been "correspondingly 'old world'", but the gang-men were not alone in drawing on tactics of the recent past. The Company had some old-world tactics of their own. And they were about to use them to great effect.

III

One month to the day after the riotous attack on the Company office, the people of Nelson spilled out of the courthouse and into the open evening air to watch the new Company agent, William Fox, perform for the first time in public.¹⁵⁵ He addressed the crowd on what would turn out to be ill-founded rumours of an impending attack by Ngāti Toa. But everyone knew he was also there because of the actions of the gang-men. Indeed, his orders from William Wakefield emphasised that the biggest problem in Nelson was not Māori or the Wairau Affray, but the labouring classes.¹⁵⁶

One of Fox's first acts was to form a committee of public safety. Despite the disquiet of some colonists, he allowed six gang-men to be elected onto the committee. Mr C. Elliot, who proposed the motion, argued it would "unite heartily all classes" and draw on the experience of those "who had served their country, and, who possessed some knowledge of the details of warfare."¹⁵⁷ It was a smart move, for the Sheriff had reported that a number of gang-men brought into town to build a fort had talked of it being an opportune moment to go on strike.¹⁵⁸ In fact it was the troublesome gang-men of Waimea East that had been relocated from the swampy outskirts to work on the Church Hill fortifications, no doubt in an effort to better monitor them. Now four of them, including those labelled as ringleaders and those who'd attended the 4 September court session, found themselves on the committee of public safety – Owen Connor, Francis Blincoe, Charles Booth and John Perry Robinson, alongside two others from different gangs.¹⁵⁹

Following the events of 26 August 1843, the Waimea gangs had continued to defy magistrate White and the Company officials. They worked when and as fast as they pleased. As Wakefield regretfully informed his directors, "the want of a sufficient police force and military control (to suppress combinations among the workmen) makes any attempt to reduce expenditure on public works and maintenance of the labouring classes unavailing."¹⁶⁰ He hoped the Governor would send troops under the pretext of Māori attack. The Company would then use the troops to resist the gang-men when relief came to an end. Fox, too, was aware of how ineffectual White and the Company were. The working class of Nelson was buoyed "by experience of its own power, and the feebleness of the police" he complained.¹⁶¹ In the face of that power, the Company was forced to make major concessions. It finally ditched a key component of its colonisation scheme: restrictions on access to land.¹⁶² A privilege previously reserved for settlers and absentee owners, Wakefield now begged Fox to entice the gang-men off relief and onto land. Making land available to the working class was "so obvious" wrote Wakefield, "as not to require further comment from me."¹⁶³ The small holdings that would become characteristic of Nelson were about to be created in direct response to the self-activity of the gang-men. In doing so, the Company echoed class responses to unrest in England a decade earlier.

Allotment had long been used as a tactic to defuse agitation. But in the 1830s it had increased dramatically with the rise in agrarian protest. English landlords, shaken by the Swing riots, hoped that access to land would foster deference in the labouring poor and bring about social peace. As John Archer notes, parcelling out land was "useful as a means of social control, discipline, and conditioning" and thrust "a wedge into the labouring community over the course of time, dividing the respectable from the disreputable, leaving the latter isolated and the former more firmly attached to the social and economic mores of the landed elite."¹⁶⁴ Those who took up land had a stake in the country and became a class that had something to lose. For Archer, "allotments as a form of social control may be considered a paternalistic anomaly within a capitalist economy."¹⁶⁵

In Nelson, the Company's paternalistic anomaly of allotment was coupled with a scheme of piecework.¹⁶⁶ Rather than earning a flat daily rate, gang-men on piecework contracts were to be paid for the work they completed. Valle was still not welcome at any of the sites, but through a timekeeper a few gang-men hinted that the rate of ninepence per cubic yard was agreeable to them. Not only did it mean they would earn almost double the ordinary relief rates, gang-men on piecework could earn their keep in two to three days and devote the rest of their time to cultivating the five-acre plots leased to them by the Company. "Thus" wrote Valle to his superiors, "the colony would gain double and three-fifths more work per week than it gets now" and "gradually reduce the number of men who claim subsistence from the New Zealand Company."¹⁶⁷ Valle believed half of the gang-men would gradually take up piecework and that example and shame would bring in another quarter. But he feared "there will always remain a worthless crew who will do nothing."¹⁶⁸

Fox agreed. Soon the Company surveyors were busy subdividing Company reserves and unsold colonial sections to be leased to the gang-men on piecework, with the provision they could buy their plot at any time for £2.5.0 per acre.

"Class composition is in constant change" writes Nick Dyer-Witheford. "If workers resisting capital compose themselves as a collectivity, capital must strive to decompose or break up this threatening cohesion." It is in this way that workers' struggles provide the dynamic of capitalist development.¹⁶⁹ "The mode of production reaches its crisis when the development of class relations within it actually transforms the relations of production themselves."¹⁷⁰ The actions of the gang-men and their wives significantly altered the capitalist property relations of Nelson, and in doing so, they forever left their mark on the land. As John E. Martin notes, "by 1845 more than 200 labourers and the same number of artisans, mechanics and other wage earners (40 percent of the total in these groups) worked smallholdings of an average size of 5 acres and kept a large number of fowls and pigs and some cows."¹⁷¹ The *Nelson Examiner* mocked the change in class composition. "Every working man styles his fellow workman 'the gentleman' and his wife a 'madam'... the cottager's five-acre patch... is designated his 'farm', while he dignifies his peck of wheat and bushel of potato by the name of 'a crop'."¹⁷² Another settler decried the "half workman, half gentleman sort of character" that piecework facilitated.¹⁷³ It was a victory for the gang-men whose desire for land had carried them far across the globe. But it came at a price. Settler privilege further embedded them into the structures of settler capitalism and its modes of relationship to tangata whenua, whose continued dispossession was at the expense of the gang-men's access to land.

By granting settler privileges to the proletariat, Fox had "thrown wide the door to the land which Captain Wakefield and Tuckett had merely pulled ajar."¹⁷⁴ Writing of Tuckett's offer to cultivate land for the month of September, Wakefield wrote optimistically that "the Company's resident agent has judiciously destroyed the combination for the present to some extent, by a distribution of gratuitous support for those men cultivating land on their own account during the present month."¹⁷⁵ However, he still believed that "at the conclusion of it the riotous conduct of the men, will, there is little doubt, recur." It was up to Fox to make sure that didn't happen.

Luckily for Fox, the scheme of piecework had sown division amongst the gang-men. They were now split into two groups with different interests: the contractor-cultivators on piecework and the day men.¹⁷⁶ But breaking the power of the gang-men took time. Throughout the rest of 1843, they continued to go-slow and timekeepers continued to be threatened. One was told that "if he has any regard for his life" he had better not "be a party to grinding the labourers."¹⁷⁷ When the Church Hill fort was completed in October, the Waimea East gangs protested their return to the swamp by doing nothing. Many only worked two days but were paid in full.¹⁷⁸ Yet by December, many of these same gang-men had taken up piecework rates.

Fox sensed his moment. Despite his sympathy for the plight of the working-class emigrants, he moved to restore the initiative to the Company, deepening the divisions he'd created and further decomposing the class power of the gang-men by shifting to fortnightly payments and laying off several of them. Fox targeted those that took advantage of the piecework scheme but had no intention of leasing land. Owen Connor, John Nixon and Robert Woodward – all from the Waimea East gang of Thomas Roil – were singled out as reaping the advantages of piecework but not the land itself.¹⁷⁹ They and others riding the Company were barred from piecework rates (although some continued on daily rates). Fox then moved to reduce the daily rates themselves. Still worried about how the gang-men would respond, he requested a garrison of military troops from Governor Fitzroy, who in February 1844 was visiting Nelson. Fitzroy demurred, but assured the Company agent that “if he found the Company was fulfilling its agreements, he would not allow Fox to be annoyed by aggressions, and that, should they occur, he would send a ship of war to arrest the ringleaders.”¹⁸⁰ Fitzroy also told a delegation of the gang-men that “he would be down on them with the military” if they caused any further trouble.¹⁸¹ With the threat of military force, Fox promptly reduced the day rates. In July 1844, he reduced them again. The gang-men still on day rates were pushed further towards piecework or out of Nelson altogether. According to Colbert, 320 people had re-emigrated by this time, which represented about 1/9th of those brought out by the Company.¹⁸²

Another person laid off was George White. The acting police magistrate had been dumped by Governor Fitzroy upon his arrival in Nelson. “Opinion had it because he was an infidel and a reader of Tom Paine”, writes B.J. Poff.¹⁸³ Assailed by the gang-men and given the cold-shoulder by Nelson’s settlers, White ended his time in Nelson as it had begun.

Despite Fitzroy’s warning, there were still examples of militancy on the part of some gang-men. On 11 September 1844, a large body of them assembled and resolved to petition for charitable aid and provisions. If these were not supplied, they declared, they would take them by force. Upon hearing the news, the new police magistrate Donald Sinclair ordered the town’s inns and shops to close. He wasn’t quick enough. A procession of 60 labourers had already marched into town. They were refused at the first store they visited, and when Sinclair finally overtook them a shouting match ensued. If they went any further, warned Sinclair, either they or he must die for it.¹⁸⁴ After much parleying the gang-men eventually dispersed. A spooked Sinclair was prepared to swear in 150 special constables. But before he did, the New Zealand Company went bankrupt. When it finally suspended its Nelson operations, the gang-men were not in a position to resist. There were threats of rustling sheep for food; Owen Connor and an American named John Greene killed their bullock. But as Jim McAloon notes, protests against a bankrupt Company was pointless.¹⁸⁵ Lean years of extreme hardship were to follow.

The Wakefield scheme of keeping labour from the land had failed, but not only for the reasons usually ascribed to it. The riotous actions of the gang-men had undone the Company’s reluctance to offer land to labourers. As Wilkes notes, they had forced the Company “to sell them land for survival.”¹⁸⁶ The gang-men’s repertoire of tactics drew on traditions of popular protest, class power and the gendered labour of making shift. Armed and angry, their actions run counter to idealised notions of pioneering farmers made good. To be sure, many would go on to become successful farmers, bakers, hoteliers, teachers and business owners. But in 1843, it was not the gang-men’s hard work that won them access to land, but idleness, work refusal and rioting; it was not contractual obedience but the desire for a deal most favourable to them. And these were just the ones who took up the offer of land. Others, like Owen Connor, left for Auckland in chains.

The struggle of the gang-men and their wives illustrates how ordinary, working-class people forever shaped the development of Nelson. Their agency highlights the role of violence and protest in colonial New Zealand, something usually associated with movements and moments of a later period. The forgetting of settler society, writes Charlotte Macdonald, is a historical amnesia, “manifest in the erasure or subsuming of the violence of nineteenth-century conflicts.”¹⁸⁷ Which begs the question: what does the Nelson example say about other events taken for granted in the historiography of nineteenth-century New Zealand? How did class composition and class conflict, both overt and covert, play out in other colonising contexts? An understanding of class as a relationship and a process, and the expanded terrain of class struggle that comes with it, has the potential to unearth or reappraise key events and narratives in New Zealand’s colonial past.¹⁸⁸ As Joshua Clover and Nikhil Pal Singh argue, “a conception of class (and class struggle) confined to a normative national, social history of wage labor, one that excludes social relations anchored in rightlessness, wagelessness, and extra-economic coercion, obscures the violence constituting capitalism’s capacity to reproduce itself.”¹⁸⁹ In Nelson, that violence left many scars. Some, like the carving up of land into roads and five-acre plots, or the wāhi tapu of Wairau, are more tangible than others. Tracing their contours reminds us of the unevenness of historical narratives, and the violence of silence.



Jared Davidson, January 2020

ENDNOTES

- ¹ White to Richmond, 4 September 1843, IA1 Box 27/ 1844/36, Archives New Zealand, Wellington Office (ANZ). This paper is indebted to the ongoing research of Sue McCliskie, whose thesis on migration and the working-class emigrants to Nelson has been invaluable to learning more about the identities of the gang-men. I've also drawn heavily on C.J. Colbert and Ruth Allan, although Allan's account of the labourers' revolt contains mistakes, mainly around dates. For a succinct account of Nelson's early years, see Jim McAloon, *Nelson: A Regional History*, Cape Catley and the Nelson City Council, 1997.
- ² W. Wakefield to Secretary of the NZ Company, 10 September 1843, as cited by C.J. Colbert, 'The Working Class in Nelson under the New Zealand Company 1841-1851', Thesis, Victoria University College, 1948, p.28.
- ³ White to Richmond, 4 September 1843, IA1 Box 27/ 1844/36, ANZ.
- ⁴ See for example, John E. Martin, *Honouring the Contract*, Victoria University Press, 2010, p.47.
- ⁵ Kristyn Harman, 'Making Shift: Mary Ann Hodgkinson and Hybrid Domesticity in Early Colonial New Zealand', *New Zealand Journal of History* 48, 1, 2014, p.32.
- ⁶ Nicola Verdon, *Rural Women Workers in Nineteenth-Century England: Gender, Work and Wages*, The Boydell Press, 2002, p.3.
- ⁷ Geoff Eley, *A Crooked Line: From Cultural History to the History of Society*, Michigan Press, 2005, p.47.
- ⁸ Raewyn Dalziel, 'Popular Protest in Early New Plymouth: Why did it occur?', *New Zealand Journal of History* 20, 1, 1986, pp.3-26.
- ⁹ William Wakefield, as cited by B.J. Poff, 'William Fox: Early Colonial Years, 1842-1848', Thesis, University of Canterbury, 1969.
- ¹⁰ For a history of the Wairau Affray and Māori in the Nelson region more broadly, see Hilary and John Mitchell, *Te Tau Ihu o te Waka*, Volumes I-IV (especially Volume I Chapter 8 for the New Zealand Company era); Waitangi Tribunal, *Te Tau Ihu o te Waka a Māui: report on Northern South Island claims*, Volumes I-II; and David Armstrong's work for histories of the Kurahaupo Iwi. For the relationship between Māori and the Company's settlers, see Rebecca Burke, "'Friendly relations between the two races were soon established"? Pākehā interactions with Māori in the planned settlements of Wellington, Nelson and New Plymouth, 1840-1860', Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2014.
- ¹¹ Chris Wilkes, 'The State as an Historical Subject: A Periodization of State Formation in New Zealand' in Brian Roper and Chris Rudd (eds.), *State and Economy in New Zealand*, Oxford University Press, 1993, p.193.
- ¹² James Dakin, 'The Working Class Pioneers', unpublished article held by the Alexander Turnbull Library (ATL), MS-Papers-2294, 1982, pp.12-13.
- ¹³ Ruth Allan, *Nelson: A History of Early Settlement*, A.H & A.W Reed, 1965, p.112.
- ¹⁴ Statistical returns, IA1 Box 27/ 1844/43, ANZ.
- ¹⁵ Jacques Rancière, 'The Myth of the Artisan', *International Labor and Working Class History* 24, 1983, p.1.
- ¹⁶ Counter to intersectionality, which suggests separate systems of exploitation and oppression intersecting, it is more useful to treat social relations such as gender, race and class as a unity of lived experience. See, among others, David Camfield, 'Re-orienting Class Analysis: Working Classes as Historical Formations', *Science and Society* 68: 4, 2004/2005; Joshua Clover and Nikhil Pal Singh, 'The Blindspot Revisited', Verso, 12 October 2018, available online at <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4079-the-blindspot-revisited>. For more on class as a relationship and a process, see Ellen Meiksins Wood, 'The Politics of Theory and the Concept of Class: E.P. Thompson and His Critics', *Studies in Political Economy* 9, 1983. For a summary of the treatment of class in New Zealand historiography, see Jim McAloon, 'Class in Colonial New Zealand: Towards a Historiographical Rehabilitation', *New Zealand Journal of History* 38, 1, 2004. A typical stratification approach to class, for example, is Jock Phillips' 'Class', <https://teara.govt.nz/en/class>
- ¹⁷ Young was responding to the narrow use of class by the traditional left, one that focused on a person's (read: male) class location to the relations of production, while ignoring the gendered relations of unwaged work and those outside of the formal wage. Iris Young, 'Beyond the Unhappy Marriage: A Critique of Dual Systems Theory', as cited by Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries*, Duke University Press, 2011, p.17.
- ¹⁸ Divisions of labour help to further illustrate the idea that class is a relationship. Emigrant labourers could share affinities, sympathies – family ties even – but the structured relationship of class meant they could find themselves with opposing or differing interests to their fellow gang-men, or to the Company officials, in certain situations. In this way class is a continuum or spectrum with opposing poles. Where someone lands on that spectrum may be dependent on the specific situation and the relations at play. But their class location is less important than the relationship itself.
- ¹⁹ Its Going Down, 'Make the World Stop: Joshua Clover on Capital & Riots Yet to Bloom', podcast, available online at <https://itsgoingdown.org/make-world-stop-joshua-clover-capital-riots-yet-to-bloom/>; Joshua Clover, *Riot.Strike. Riot: The New Era of Uprisings*, Verso, 2016. For an analysis of Clover's work in relation to the New Zealand context, see Dylan Taylor, 'Riots, Strikes, and Radical Politics in Aotearoa New Zealand', *Counterfutures* 7, 2019, pp.75-115.
- ²⁰ W.H. Oliver, 'Rees, Sinclair and the Social Patern' in Peter Munz, (ed.), *The Feel of Truth: Essays in New Zealand and Pacific History*, A.H. Reed, 1969, p.163.
- ²¹ David Renton, 'How Words Have Been Used: Notes on the Re-making of Class', *Socialist History* 40, 2012, p.8.
- ²² A. Wakefield to W. Wakefield, 4 April 1842, as cited by Allan, *Nelson*, p.95.
- ²³ Stephens, 7 September 1843, 'Extracts and Letters', MS-2053, ATL.
- ²⁴ Joan Scott, 'On Language, Gender, and Working-Class History' in Joan Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History: 30th Anniversary Edition*, Columbia University Press, 2018; Joan Scott, 'Gender: Still a Useful Category of Analysis?', *Diogenes* 225, 2010, pp.7-14.
- ²⁵ Martin, *Honouring the Contract*, p.37.
- ²⁶ The gang-men aboard the *Phoebe* were Richard Hartley, Thomas Harvey, William Nesbitt, Thomas Kite and John Perry Robinson. Letter, 6 April 1843, NZC208 Box 1/ 2/18. The gang-men aboard the *Indus* were Charles Clark, Adam Cockroft, Elisha Round, Thomas Nock and Henry James.
- ²⁷ Allan, *Nelson*, p.80.
- ²⁸ Allan, *Nelson*, p.183.
- ²⁹ Extracts from a Letter dated Nelson, 27 April 1842, *Letters from Settlers and Labouring Emigrants in the New Zealand Company's Settlements of Wellington, Nelson and New Plymouth: from February 1842, to January, 1843*, available online at <http://www.enzb.auckland.ac.nz/document/?wid=862>
- ³⁰ A. Wakefield to W. Wakefield, 27 August 1842, NZC104 Box 1/2, ANZ.
- ³¹ W. Cullen, 10 April 1842, *Letters from Settlers and Labouring Emigrants in the New Zealand Company's Settlements of Wellington, Nelson and New Plymouth: from February 1842, to January, 1843*, available online at <http://www.enzb.auckland.ac.nz/document/?wid=862>
- ³² M.F. Lloyd Prichard, *An Economic History of New Zealand*, Collins, 1970, p.45. For an interesting view on absenteeism being necessary to the Wakefield scheme of colonisation, see Michael Turnbull, *The New Zealand Bubble: The Wakefield Theory in Practice*, Price and Milburn, 1959, p.14.
- ³³ Alfred Saunders, *A History of New Zealand*, Whitcombe & Tombs, 1896, p.173.
- ³⁴ Allan, *Nelson*, p.184.
- ³⁵ Allan, *Nelson*, p.184.
- ³⁶ Allan, *Nelson*, p.184.
- ³⁷ Allan, *Nelson*, p.184.

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- ³⁸ Secretary NZC to W. Wakefield, 22 June 1843, cited by Colbert, 'The Working Class in Nelson under the New Zealand Company 1841-1851', p.31.
- ³⁹ See Allan, *Nelson*, p.189; New Zealand Company, *Report of the directors of the New-Zealand Company: presented to the ... general meeting of the shareholders – 12th Report – Appendix H*, p.94, P ATL NZ 325.341, ATL.
- ⁴⁰ Stephens, 25 December 1842, 'Extracts and Letters', MS-2053, ATL.
- ⁴¹ Allan, *Nelson*, p.184.
- ⁴² Petition of the Working Men of Nelson, NZC208 Box 1/ 2/2, ANZ.
- ⁴³ Petition of the Working Men of Nelson, NZC208 Box 1/ 2/2, ANZ. For a similar petition from labourers in early New Plymouth and a discussion of petitioning in England, see Dalziel, 'Popular Protest in Early New Plymouth: Why did it occur?', p.18.
- ⁴⁴ *Nelson Examiner*, 21 January 1843.
- ⁴⁵ Allan, *Nelson*, p.188, citing the *Nelson Examiner*, 21 January 1843.
- ⁴⁶ *Nelson Examiner*, 21 January 1843.
- ⁴⁷ *Nelson Examiner*, 21 January 1843.
- ⁴⁸ Martin, *Honouring the Contract*, p.40; Allan, *Nelson*, p.188. Saunders was a supporter of Robinson's campaign for Superintendent and his comments must be read in this context. For more on the role Robinson later played in Nelson, see John Griffiths and Vic Evans, 'The Chartist Legacy in the British World: Evidence from New Zealand's Southern Settlements, 1840s-1870s', *History* 99, 2014, pp.797-818.
- ⁴⁹ Writing on 25 July 1843, Tuckett states "on the suspension of one pay day my office, Saturday week" which could be 15 July or 22 July. Allan gives the date as 15 July, but I lean towards 22 July as that is the last weekly payroll compiled by Spooner before the August restructure.
- ⁵⁰ Tuckett to W. Wakefield, 25 July 1843, NZC104 Box 1/ 3, ANZ.
- ⁵¹ Adrian Randall, *Riotous Assemblies: Popular Protest in Hanoverian England*, Oxford University Press, 2006, p.19.
- ⁵² Randall, *Riotous Assemblies*, p.11.
- ⁵³ W. Wakefield to Secretary NZC, 13 January 1843, as cited by Colbert, 'The Working Class in Nelson under the New Zealand Company 1841-1851', p.26.
- ⁵⁴ W. Wakefield, *Report of the directors of the New-Zealand Company – 12th Report – Appendix H*, p.89, P ATL NZ 325.341, ATL.
- ⁵⁵ Colbert, 'The Working Class in Nelson under the New Zealand Company 1841-1851', p.34.
- ⁵⁶ Allan, *Nelson*, p.185.
- ⁵⁷ Tuckett to W. Wakefield, 25 July 1843, NZC104 Box 1/ 3, ANZ.
- ⁵⁸ W. Wakefield, *Report of the directors of the New-Zealand Company – 12th Report – Appendix H*, p.89, P ATL NZ 325.341, ATL.
- ⁵⁹ Fox to W. Wakefield, *Report of the directors of the New-Zealand Company – 12th Report – Appendix H*, p.128, P ATL NZ 325.341, ATL.
- ⁶⁰ Colbert, 'The Working Class in Nelson under the New Zealand Company 1841-1851', p.27.
- ⁶¹ B.J. Poff, 'William Fox: Early Colonial Years, 1842-1848', Thesis, University of Canterbury, 1969, pp.75-76.
- ⁶² A few gang-men were injured at Wairau and three were killed: James McGregor (who led a Maitai Valley gang), Isaac Smith, and Thomas Tyrrell.
- ⁶³ Allan, *Nelson*, p.276.
- ⁶⁴ Tuckett to W. Wakefield, 25 July 1843, NZC104 Box 1/ 3, ANZ.
- ⁶⁵ W. Wakefield, *Report of the directors of the New-Zealand Company – 12th Report – Appendix H*, p.95, P ATL NZ 325.341, ATL.
- ⁶⁶ Tuckett to Valle, NZC208 Box 1/ 2 (49), ANZ.
- ⁶⁷ Tuckett to Valle, NZC208 Box 1/ 2 (49), ANZ.
- ⁶⁸ Tuckett to W. Wakefield, 25 July 1843, NZC104 Box 1/ 3, ANZ.
- ⁶⁹ Tuckett to W. Wakefield, 30 August 1843, IA1 Box 27 1843/1958, ANZ.
- ⁷⁰ Tuckett to W. Wakefield, 30 August 1843, IA1 Box 27 1843/1958, ANZ.
- ⁷¹ Tuckett to W. Wakefield, 30 August 1843, IA1 Box 27 1843/1958, ANZ.
- ⁷² Tuckett to W. Wakefield, 30 August 1843, IA1 Box 27 1843/1958, ANZ.
- ⁷³ Valle to Tuckett, 25 August 1843, IA1 Box 27/ 1843/1958, ANZ.
- ⁷⁴ William Pratt, *Colonial Experiences, or Incidents and Reminiscences of Thirty-four Years in New Zealand*, 1877, available online at <http://www.enzb.auckland.ac.nz/document/?wid=721>
- ⁷⁵ Pratt, *Colonial Experiences, or Incidents and Reminiscences of Thirty-four Years in New Zealand*.
- ⁷⁶ Pratt, *Colonial Experiences, or Incidents and Reminiscences of Thirty-four Years in New Zealand*.
- ⁷⁷ Valle to Tuckett, 29 August 1843, IA1 Box 27/ 1843/1958, ANZ.
- ⁷⁸ Valle to Tuckett, 25 August 1843, IA1 Box 27/ 1843/1958, ANZ.
- ⁷⁹ Richard S. Hill, *Policing the Colonial Frontier: The Theory and Practice of Coercive Social and Racial Control in New Zealand, 1767-1867*, Department of Internal Affairs, 1986, p.209.
- ⁸⁰ Richard S. Hill, *Policing the Colonial Frontier*, p.209.
- ⁸¹ White to Richmond, 4 September 1843, IA1 Box 27/ 1843/1958, ANZ.
- ⁸² White to Richmond, 4 September 1843, IA1 Box 27/ 1843/1958, ANZ.
- ⁸³ Valle to Tuckett, 29 August 1843, IA1 Box 27/ 1843/1958, ANZ; *Nelson Examiner*, 9 September 1843.
- ⁸⁴ White to Richmond, 4 September 1843, IA1 Box 27/ 1843/1958, ANZ.
- ⁸⁵ White to Richmond, 4 September 1843, IA1 Box 27/ 1843/1958, ANZ. John Perry Robinson later claimed that guns were often carried to work by the gang-men for shooting birds, and that on Saturday 26 August they had not yet taken them home and there was no evil intent. His claim that a crowd of angry labourers did not use weapons that were on hand to intimidate is contradicted by White's report, and must be considered in the context of Robinson's agitation in 1850 for compensation from the Company on behalf of the gang-men, where it was only natural to downplay the armed element of their action and to emphasise respectability. See Allan, *Nelson*, p.277.
- ⁸⁶ White to Richmond, 4 September 1843, IA1 Box 27/ 1843/1958, ANZ.
- ⁸⁷ Valle to Tuckett, 29 August 1843, IA1 Box 27/ 1843/1958, ANZ.
- ⁸⁸ Tuckett to W. Wakefield, 30 August 1843, IA1 Box 27/ 1843/1958, ANZ.
- ⁸⁹ Tuckett to W. Wakefield, 30 August 1843, IA1 Box 27/ 1843/1958, ANZ.
- ⁹⁰ White to Richmond, 31 August 1843, IA1 Box 27/ 1843/1958, ANZ.
- ⁹¹ White writes that three men were arrested in the evening and two the following day, while Valle writes that eight men were arranged before the magistrates.

- ⁹² Valle: "On Monday, 4 Sep, 8 of the men who participated in the assault on the undersigned, were arraigned before White and McDonald. Four of the above were parties against whom the undersigned had sworn as ringleaders; but as they had refused to give their names, and the undersigned could only identify their persons but was not sure of their names, they were dismissed with an admonition. The bench said after dismissed, that the prisoners ought to have their pay for their day's trial, and also all their friends who were present in court, and employed on the Public Works. This wish was done by M. White on Sat 9 Sep 1843, after the men had all claimed their pay the same as those who had worked on that day. Number of absentees, 4th Sep, 36 men." Pay list, NZC231 Box 2/ 4, ANZ.
- ⁹³ White to Richmond, 4 September 1843, IA1 Box 27/ 1843/1958, ANZ.
- ⁹⁴ White to Richmond, 4 September 1843, IA1 Box 27/ 1843/1958, ANZ.
- ⁹⁵ *Nelson Examiner*, 9 September 1843.
- ⁹⁶ Fox to W. Wakefield, 19 September 1843, *Report of the directors of the New-Zealand Company – 12th Report – Appendix H*, p.112-123, P ATL NZ 325.341, ATL; Allan, *Nelson*, p.280.
- ⁹⁷ Pamela Le Prou, *Waters Back*, Rimu Publishing, 1989, p.6. Part II has made use of numerous genealogical sources and databases, which come with their own pitfalls. The exact ages of many of the gang-men and their wives are not always certain, and there are bound to be errors.
- ⁹⁸ Le Prou, *Waters Back*, p.13.
- ⁹⁹ Elma Wright, 'Quite a remarkable woman; Charlotte Hill, her forbears and her family', manuscript, MS-Papers-4280-021, ATL, p.5.
- ¹⁰⁰ Wright, 'Quite a remarkable woman', p.5.
- ¹⁰¹ Pay list, NZC231 Box 2/ 4, ANZ.
- ¹⁰² Mary Ann Hodgkinson, as cited by Kristin Harman, 'Making Shift: Mary Ann Hodgkinson and Hybrid Domesticity in Early Colonial New Zealand', *New Zealand Journal of History* 48, 1, 2014, p.35.
- ¹⁰³ Peter Linebaugh, *Red Round Globe Hot Burning: A Tale at the Crossroads of Commons and Closure, of Love and Terror, of Race and Class, and of Kate and Ned Despard*, University of California Press, 2019, p.3.
- ¹⁰⁴ Harman, 'Making Shift'. For more on making shift, see Verdon, *Rural Women Workers in Nineteenth-Century England*, pp.166-167.
- ¹⁰⁵ Dalziel, 'Popular Protest in Early New Plymouth', pp.4-5.
- ¹⁰⁶ Pay lists, NZC231 Box 2/ 4, ANZ.
- ¹⁰⁷ William Jessop, as cited by Gary Howells, "'For I was tired of England Sir': English pauper emigrant strategies, 1834-60", *Social History* 23:2, 1998, p.185; Coroner's Inquest of John Sloss, JC-N61 Box 1/ 1, ANZ.
- ¹⁰⁸ Stephens, Diary No.2, MSX-7703, ATL.
- ¹⁰⁹ Pratt, *Colonial Experiences, or Incidents and Reminiscences of Thirty-four Years in New Zealand*.
- ¹¹⁰ Jacques Rancière, *Proletarian Nights*, Verso, 2012, p.29.
- ¹¹¹ Marion Stringer, *Just Another Row of Spuds: A Pioneer History of Waimea South*, 1999, p.233; Roger Batt, 'John and Ann Batt', *The Prow*, available online at <http://www.theprow.org.nz/yourstory/john-and-ann-batt#.XilYNs4zaUk>. Like the biographer of John Perry Robinson, Roger Batt notes: "we have no specific idea of what happened to the Batts when they stepped ashore in Nelson on 28 October 1842." John Batt, like Robinson, was labouring on the gangs.
- ¹¹² Letter, 24 October 1848, SSD1 Box 1/ 244, ANZ.
- ¹¹³ Anne McFadgen, 'The "Ferry Inn" at Tapawera', available online at <http://rustlingsinthewind.blogspot.com/2017/06/the-ferry-inn-at-tapawera.html>
- ¹¹⁴ *Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle*, 10 August 1859.
- ¹¹⁵ *Nelson Examiner*, 23 August 1845.
- ¹¹⁶ Dawn Smith, 'Shelter: Emergency Housing in 19th Century Nelson', *Nelson Historical Society Journal* 6, 5, 2002, available online at http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-NHSJ06_05-t1-body1-d5.html
- ¹¹⁷ *Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle*, 16 October 1852; *New Zealand Police Gazette* 1878, p.71,
- ¹¹⁸ *Reading Mercury*, 9 June 1834; *Windsor Express*, 6 February 1836; *Windsor and Eton Express*, 4 May 1839.
- ¹¹⁹ *Bucks Herald*, 24 April 1841.
- ¹²⁰ Pam Blincoe, 'Francis John Blincoe and his Family', available online at [http://www.roefamilytree.info/documents/FRANCIS%20JOHN%20BLINCOE%20AND%20HIS%20FAMILY%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.roefamilytree.info/documents/FRANCIS%20JOHN%20BLINCOE%20AND%20HIS%20FAMILY%20(1).pdf)
- ¹²¹ John E. Archer, *By a Flash and a Scare: Incendiarism, Animal Maiming, and Poaching in East Anglia 1815-1870*, Clarendon Press, 1990, p.8.
- ¹²² Sue McCliskie, personal correspondence. On the role of Chartism in Nelson, see Griffiths and Evans, 'The Chartist Legacy in the British World'.
- ¹²³ Sue McCliskie, personal correspondence.
- ¹²⁴ Randall, *Riotous Assemblies*, pp.5-6.
- ¹²⁵ Katrina Navickas, 'What happened to class? New histories of labour and collective action in Britain', *Social History* 36:2, p.199.
- ¹²⁶ Andrew Charlesworth (ed.), *An Atlas of Rural Protest in Britain 1548-1900*, Routledge, 1983, p.156.
- ¹²⁷ Dakin, 'Working Class Pioneers', p.23.
- ¹²⁸ George Rude and Eric Hobsbawm, *Captain Swing*, W.W. Norton & Company, 1975, pp.104-105.
- ¹²⁹ Rude and Hobsbawm, *Captain Swing*, p.123; Jill Chambers, *Wiltshire Machine Breakers*, Letchworth, 1993.
- ¹³⁰ Rude and Hobsbawm, *Captain Swing*, p.124.
- ¹³¹ Rude and Hobsbawm, *Captain Swing*, pp.130-131.
- ¹³² Katrina Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Place and Space, 1789-1848*, Manchester University Press, 2016, p.274.
- ¹³³ Charlesworth (ed.), *An Atlas of Rural Protest in Britain 1548-1900*, p.157.
- ¹³⁴ Dakin, 'Working Class Pioneers', p.23
- ¹³⁵ Alfred Saunders, *Tales of a Pioneer: Episodes in the Life of Alfred Saunders*, 1927, p.16.
- ¹³⁶ Journal of Sarah Pratt, MSX-3895, ATL.
- ¹³⁷ Journal of Sarah Pratt, MSX-3895, ATL.
- ¹³⁸ Navickas, 'What happened to class?', p.197.
- ¹³⁹ Archer, *By a Flash and a Scare*, p.27.
- ¹⁴⁰ Rude and Hobsbawm, *Captain Swing*, p.66.
- ¹⁴¹ Charlesworth (ed.), *An Atlas of Rural Protest in Britain 1548-1900*, p.139.
- ¹⁴² Samantha A. Shave, *Pauper Policies: Poor Law Practice in England, 1780-1850*, Manchester University Press, 2017, p.18.
- ¹⁴³ Roger Wells, 'Social Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside in the early Nineteenth Century: A Rejoinder' in Mick Reed and Roger Wells (eds.), *Class, Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside, 1700-1880*, Frank Cass, 1990, p.69.
- ¹⁴⁴ Archer, *By a Flash and a Scare*, p.39.
- ¹⁴⁵ Clover, *Riot.Strike. Riot*, p.60

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- ¹⁴⁶ Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Place and Space, 1789-1848*, p.16.
- ¹⁴⁷ Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Place and Space*, p.131.
- ¹⁴⁸ Dalziel, 'Popular Protest in Early New Plymouth', p.18.
- ¹⁴⁹ Petition from the Brook Street Valley road gang, undated (July 1843), NZC208 Box 1/ 2/119, ANZ.
- ¹⁵⁰ Randall, *Riotous Assemblies*, p.10.
- ¹⁵¹ Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Place and Space*, p.152.
- ¹⁵² Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Place and Space*, pp.272-273.
- ¹⁵³ Sue McCliskie, personal communication.
- ¹⁵⁴ T.J. Thompson to W. Fox, 1 April 1844, NZC208 Box 1/ 3/42, ANZ.
- ¹⁵⁵ Poff, 'William Fox', p.54.
- ¹⁵⁶ W. Wakefield to Fox, 4 September 1843, *Report of the directors of the New-Zealand Company – 12th Report – Appendix H*, p.93, P ATL NZ 325.341, ATL.
- ¹⁵⁷ *Nelson Examiner*, 30 September 1843.
- ¹⁵⁸ Poff, 'William Fox', pp.54-55.
- ¹⁵⁹ *Nelson Examiner*, 30 September 1843; Sue McCliskie, personal correspondence.
- ¹⁶⁰ W Wakefield to Harington, 23 December 1843, NZC3/13, as cited by Allan, *Nelson*, p.355.
- ¹⁶¹ Fox to W. Wakefield, 1 November 1843, *Report of the directors of the New-Zealand Company – 12th Report – Appendix H*, p.131, P ATL NZ 325.341, ATL.
- ¹⁶² McAloon, *Nelson: A Regional History*, p.38.
- ¹⁶³ W Wakefield to Fox, 8 November 1843, NZC 203 Box 1/ 2, ANZ.
- ¹⁶⁴ Archer, *By a Flash and a Scare*, p.66.
- ¹⁶⁵ Archer, *By a Flash and a Scare*, p.64.
- ¹⁶⁶ Piecework itself has an interesting and contentious history. See E.P. Thompson, 'Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism', *Past & Present* 38, 1967, pp.56-97; Mike Reed, 'Social Change and Social Conflict in Nineteenth Century England: A Comment' in Mick Reed and Roger Wells (eds.), *Class, Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside, 1700-1880*, Frank Cass, 1990, p.105.
- ¹⁶⁷ Valle to Tuckett, 24 September 1843, *Report of the directors of the New-Zealand Company – 12th Report – Appendix H*, p.125, P ATL NZ 325.341, ATL.
- ¹⁶⁸ Valle to Tuckett, 24 September 1843, *Report of the directors of the New-Zealand Company – 12th Report – Appendix H*, p.125, P ATL NZ 325.341, ATL.
- ¹⁶⁹ Nick Dyer-Witheford, *Cyber-Marx: Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High-technology Capitalism*, University of Illinois Press, 1999, p.66.
- ¹⁷⁰ Wood, "'The Politics of Theory and the Concept of Class', p.64.
- ¹⁷¹ Martin, *Honouring the Contract*, p.47.
- ¹⁷² *Nelson Examiner*, 9 December 1843.
- ¹⁷³ *Nelson Examiner*, 29 June 1844.
- ¹⁷⁴ Poff, 'William Fox', pp.79-80.
- ¹⁷⁵ W. Wakefield to Richmond, *Report of the directors of the New-Zealand Company – 12th Report – Appendix H*, p.106, P ATL NZ 325.341, ATL.
- ¹⁷⁶ Poff, 'William Fox', pp.79-80.
- ¹⁷⁷ Tuckett to Fox, 29 October 1843, *Report of the directors of the New-Zealand Company – 12th Report – Appendix H*, p.127, P ATL NZ 325.341, ATL.
- ¹⁷⁸ Valle, 9-15 October pay list, NZC231 Box 2/ 4, ANZ.
- ¹⁷⁹ T.J. Thompson to W. Fox, 1 April 1844, NZC208 Box 1/ 3/42, ANZ.
- ¹⁸⁰ Allan, *Nelson*, p.290.
- ¹⁸¹ Poff, 'William Fox', p.82.
- ¹⁸² Colbert, 'Working Class Pioneers', p.21.
- ¹⁸³ Poff, 'William Fox', p.62.
- ¹⁸⁴ Sinclair to Superintendent of the Southern Division of NZ, 17 September 1844, NM8 Box 1, 1844/309, ANZ.
- ¹⁸⁵ McAloon, *Nelson: A Regional History*, p.38.
- ¹⁸⁶ Wilkes, 'The State as an Historical Subject', p.193.
- ¹⁸⁷ Charlotte Macdonald, 'Woolwich to Wellington: From Settler Colony to Garrisoned Sovereignty', *New Zealand Journal of History* 53, 1, 2019, p.50.
- ¹⁸⁸ See, for example, McAloon, 'Class in Colonial New Zealand'.
- ¹⁸⁹ Clover and Singh, 'The Blindspot Revisited'.