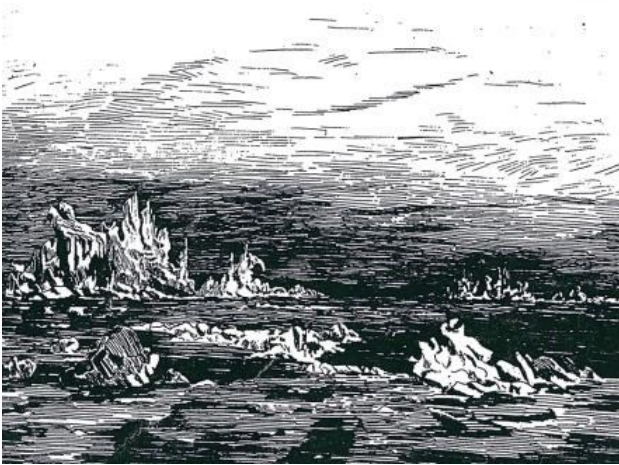


ICEBERGS AT THE CHATHAM ISLANDS

Iceberg sightings around the Chatham Islands would have been the topic of much discussion among Islanders in the last days of October 1892. Icebergs were seen in the northern part of Hanson Bay, close to Owenga, outside Petre Bay and near The Horns. Icebergs were also observed drifting through Pitt Strait, breaking up around Pitt Island and one stranded between Pitt and South East Islands. The icebergs were carried along by very cold and strong south to south west winds and arrived following a two-month period in which the winds from the south were bitterly cold.



This very unusual event was widely reported in the newspapers in early 1893. The *New Zealand Herald's* correspondent on the Island noted (11 Feb 1893) '...we Islanders were amazed at beholding a number of icebergs floating about... The Maoris only expressed wonder at the grand sight of snowy-white mountains of vast size (some being ... about 600 feet high) floating slowly round the Island...'

Alexander Shand reported to the Wellington Philosophical Society in February 1893 (*Trans. & Proc. Royal Society NZ*, 25, 516). He said that 'On Friday, 28th October, 1892, icebergs were seen in the northern part of Hanson Bay, in lat. 44 S., drifting, borne back and forwards under the influence of the tides between the Motukara and Te Whakaru, one berg coming in quite close, but being ultimately driven off by the wind in a south-east direction.' In size and shape he reported that one 'appeared to be something between 160ft and 200ft in height, and about four to five hundred yards in length, precipitous, with high pinnacles on opposite ends, the centre comparatively level. ... near the Horns (Whakahewa), a large one was ... estimated by the known height of the adjoining

land to be not less than 500ft in height, as its summit towered over certain parts of the land... The one near Ouenga [sic] appeared to be more of a razor-back in shape, sloping down to about 50ft or 60ft from about 180ft in height, thence precipitous to the Water's edge.' One drifting through Pitt Strait was 'as large in apparent size (over 900ft in height) as Mangere (an island possibly three-quarters of a mile in size, or more), but not so high.' He noted that 'The wind two or three days prior to the arrival of the bergs had been south and south-south-west, very keen and strong; and on the whole, from September previous, whenever the wind got to the south, it was very cold ...' When you consider that on average only one tenth of an iceberg is visible above water, the true size of these icebergs was remarkable.

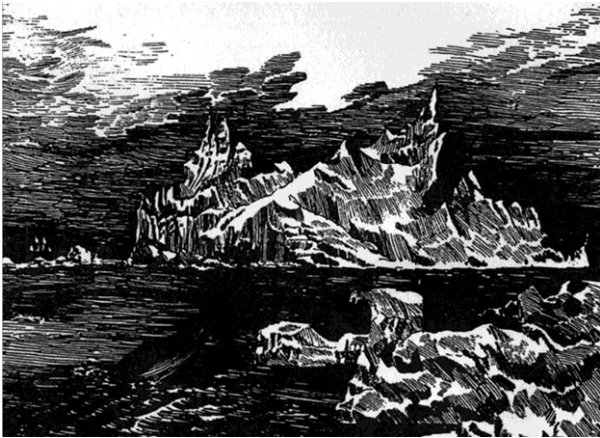
The *Nautical Magazine* for November [1892] cautioned masters of vessels travelling from New Zealand to the United Kingdom that icebergs had been met with in a number of localities south and west of the Cape of Good Hope, in some cases forming 'impenetrable ice barriers stretching for many miles.'

The captain of the *Star of England* reported (*Evening Post*, 28 Jan 1893) that the morning after he left Lyttelton (18th October) a very large iceberg was sighted about half a mile off the vessel and soon after they had to stop steaming as the ship was entirely surrounded by frozen masses. By steering westward, they finally cleared the moving icefield in the afternoon.



A poem about the unexpected arrivals tells of a cup of tea brewed using ice retrieved from one of the icebergs. The ice which originated in Antarctica,

would have begun its journey in one of the many glaciers that flow from the Antarctic Ice Sheet. When the glacier ice reached the sea, it was incorporated into one of the ice shelves that fringe the frozen continent. Upon reaching the seaward edge of the ice shelf the ice broke off forming an iceberg. The iceberg was carried by ocean currents and wind all the way from Antarctica to the Chatham Islands where some of the Antarctic ice ended its journey as a hot cup of tea.



The following poem is an excerpt from
“My Seventy Years on the Chatham Islands.”
Reminiscences by David Holmes (published 2020)

Antarctic Tea

A true story from the Chatham Islands (retold by
Don Long)

One hundred years ago
Mrs Papen lived on a farm
on the Chatham Islands.
Mrs Papen was famous for her tea.
It came in large wooden chests
on the SS Kahu.
Mrs Papen liked to invite
her friends and neighbours to tea.
She baked tea cakes and apple pies
and rewena paraoa.
And, of course, there was tea.

One day, Mr Papen ran to find his wife,
who was out thistling.
‘Come and look,’ he shouted.
“There’s something in the bay.’

A crowd gathered on the beach.
A chief, Paina Te Poki, said
‘I think it’s a ship.’

Miriama, who lived next to Mrs Papen,
said, ‘It’s a flock of birds.’
‘Maybe it’s a whale,’
said Brother Engst, the missionary.

‘No, it’s an iceberg,’
said Mrs Papen,
who had the best eyes of all.

She asked the men to row out
and chip off some ice.
‘Then everyone must come
and have a cup of tea,’ she said.

The ice was melted in the biggest pot.
Then a big pot of tea was made.
The tea cakes were sprinkled with sugar
The crust of the pie was golden brown.
Miriama’s husband, Wi Te Tahuu,
had a second piece of rewena paraoa.

And they all had tea.
The tea was best of all.
‘This is Antarctic tea,’
said Mrs Papen.
And Mr Papen just smiled.