



HERITAGE NEW ZEALAND
POUHERE TAONGA



Flags of New Zealand

No Flag, No Trade



All the flags in this overview are maritime flags – apart from the Tino Rangatiratanga flag which is an assertion of Te Ao Māori.

New Zealand's first flags, however, were largely about commerce because without an official flag, people in New Zealand couldn't trade...

NEW ZEALAND'S FIRST FLAG (TECHNICALLY SPEAKING)?

When the New Zealand-built ship the *Sir George Murray* sailed into Sydney Harbour in 1830 without a register (a certificate containing ownership and construction details), port officials promptly seized her.

Constructed in the Hokianga, the *Sir George Murray* – like all other New Zealand-built ships at the time – couldn't sail under the British flag because New Zealand was not yet a British colony. In vain, the *Sir George Murray* may have flown a Māori cloak in an attempt to signify the ship's origin – though this didn't satisfy Sydney officials.

There were good reasons for flying such an unusual ensign as *Ngāpuhi Speaks* records:

“In their international trading, Māori ships were reported to sometimes display their own distinctive flag of woven flax fibre such as a pākē [flax rain cloak].”

Landing in Australia without a register broke British navigation laws, however, and the ship was taken by authorities and sold.

On board the *Sir George Murray* at the time of the seizure were two Northland rangatira – Patuone and Taonui, who also happened to be part owners of the ship. *Ngāpuhi Speaks* goes on to record the flow-on effect of the impounding:

“The seizure concerned all the northern rangatira with trading interests [...] “Kawiti went to Pinia to speak with Nene and Patuone to bring themselves together; let's create something to exert the way we carry out our business.” As a result, the northern rangatira began working with officials in Sydney, the missionary Henry Williams and later with James Busby to select an appropriate flag to signal their identity and authority.”

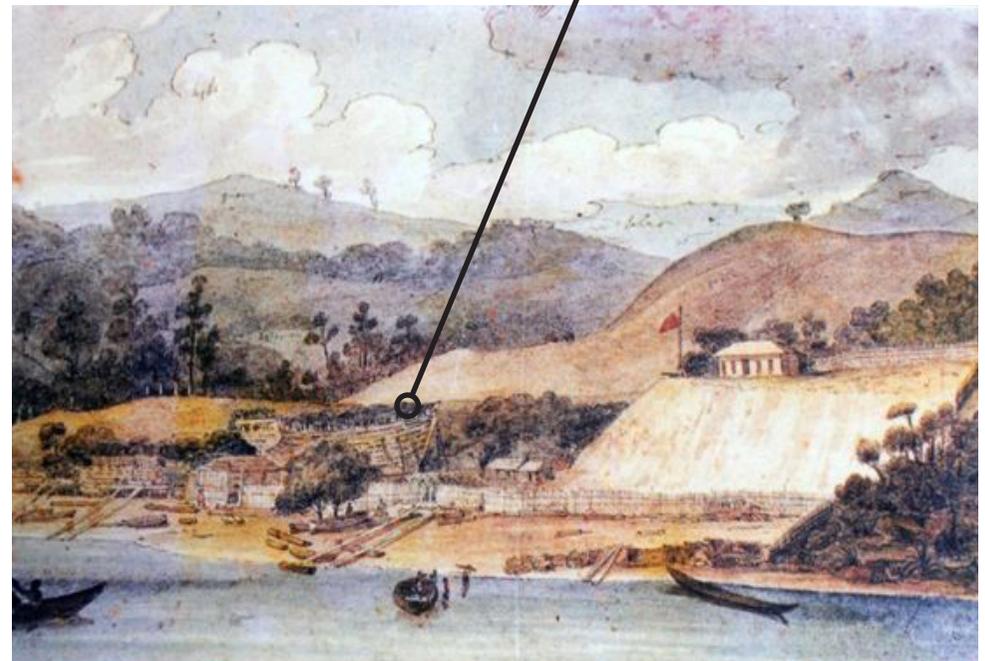
Source: Te Ara, Encyclopaedia of New Zealand. *Ngāpuhi Speaks* – He Wakaputanga and Te Tiriti o Waitangi; Independent Report on Ngāpuhi Nui Tonu Claim (2012).



A Pākē (rain cape). Something similar could have been used as our first national flag (see story). Te Papa Tongarewa.



The shipyard at Horeke painted by Augustus Earle in 1828, with a close up of a ship being constructed in the slips – quite possibly the *Sir George Murray*.





Crombie, John Nicol, 1827-1878. Crombie, John Nichol, 1827-1878. Attributed works :Patuone. Brother of the loyal and faithful chief Tamati Waka, uncle of Pomare, who as soon as he saw my portrait immediately recognised the feature and rubbed noses with it at Tottenham. [Between 1855 and 1862]. Strutt, William 1825-1915 :A collection of drawings in water colour ink and pencil illustrative of the scenery and early life of settlers and Maoris of New Zealand. 1855-1863. 1st series.. Ref: E-452-f-003-2. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. /records/22651706

Patuone

Patuone was said to have been at least 108 years old when he died in 1872.

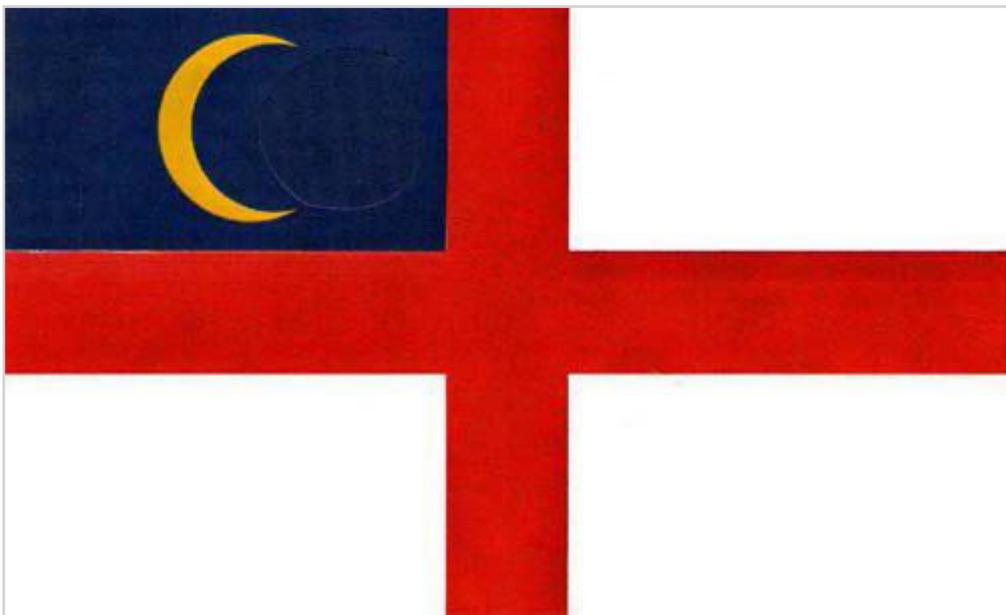
During the course of his long and eventful life, Patuone witnessed change on an epic scale, beginning when his father – Tapua – saw Cook’s vessel *Endeavour* near Cape Brett in 1769. After throwing some fish on board from his waka, Tapua was invited on-board. When gifts were exchanged The ‘leader of the Goblins’ – possibly a reference to Cook himself – presented Tapua with a joint of pork and a red garment which he later gave to the young Patuone and his sister Tari. This encounter may have given Patuone a view of Europeans that differed from many of his peers.

From those early beginnings, Patuone appears to have embraced change and seized opportunity at a time when change was happening all around him. It’s possible that as early as 1819, Patuone may have offered protection to Thomas Raine, David Ramsay and Gordon Browne who established a shipbuilding business in the Hokianga.

Hokianga grew to become one of the earliest centres of trade with New South Wales, including kauri logs, sawn timber, potatoes, flax and wheat. By 1830, Patuone’s commercial interests were such that his now infamous voyage to Sydney that year – when the ship that he part-owned was impounded – was actually a trading mission.

Source: teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1p12/patuone-eruera-maihi
Two Worlds - First Meetings Between Māori and Europeans 1642-1772, Dame Anne Salmond

COULD THIS HAVE BEEN OUR SECOND 'FIRST' FLAG?



Research into the Hōreke shipyard in the Hokianga has uncovered a fascinating account of a 'national' flag, which has been almost unknown over the years.

When the *Sir George Murray* had been seized and her cargo unloaded, the ship was sold at auction on 20 January 1831. Her new owner was Captain Thomas McDonnell, who sailed for New Zealand in March 1831 after having been granted a temporary licence by the Collector of Customs, Sydney to trade across the Tasman Sea.

Although he had his restricted licence to trade between New South Wales and New Zealand, it didn't permit him to enter the growing whaling trade, for example, nor to venture further afield to Britain with timber as he was probably keen to do, or even to trade in Asia.

Intriguingly, the 22 August edition of the *Sydney Herald* from 1831 carried this story:

“Captain McDonnell, of the *Sir George Murray*, hoists the New Zealand colours at the mast head; they are the English St George ensign, the ground of one quarter being blue, and having a half moon in its centre. This, we believe, is the first time these colours have ever been exhibited.”

The mysterious 'New Zealand Colours' have almost disappeared from recorded history – perhaps unsurprisingly as they were never formally gazetted or widely used (and the crescent moon may well have been white instead of yellow). It's possible that in order to carry out trade, Thomas McDonnell may have used or adapted an existing flag, claiming it to be a trading flag of New Zealand.

Source: Te Ara, Encyclopaedia of New Zealand. www.teara.govt.nz/en/1966/mcdonnell-thomas



McDonnell & Patuone

Thomas McDonnell Senior appears to have been well connected in English society. In 1835 he was appointed as Additional British Resident in New Zealand, much to the annoyance of the existing Resident, James Busby.

McDonnell's highly suspicious land dealings in the Hokianga were to later earn him the nickname of 'McDiddle' by settlers after his reputation for ripping people off – as well as the distrust of many Hokianga tribes. He seems to have been a colourful personality.

According to one account, in later years during an investigation into his shonky land claims, McDonnell “insulted every magistrate ever stationed in the north”. He was clearly a man who liked to get his own way.

McDonnell's connections, his history as a trader with the East India Company and his background in the Royal Navy meant that he may have been able to pull the wool over the eyes of Sydney's officials with his own completely bogus flag; on at least one occasion anyway.

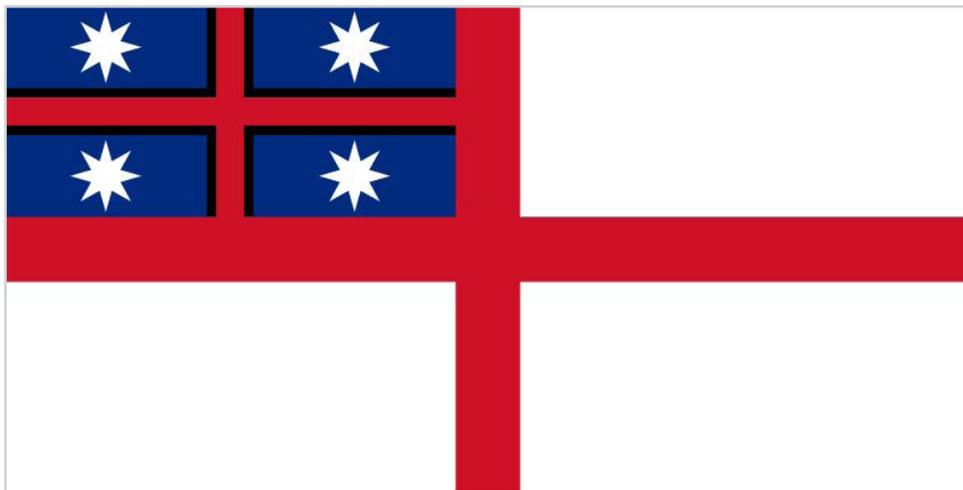
McDonnell had a firm ally in Patuone, however, who was as keen to get trading again as McDonnell was. In a covering letter to the New South Wales authorities, Patuone spelt out that McDonnell, and his ship, was operating under his chiefly authority:

“We the principal chiefs of Hokianga in the Island of New Zealand PATUONE and TAONU I send greeting to say that Thomas MacDonnell, a Resident and Land holder in our country is the sole owner of the Barque or Vessel called the “Sir George Murray”, whereof the said Thomas MacDonnell now is Master, that the said Barque or Vessel called the “Sir George Murray” was built in OUR TERRITORIES of our Timber...”

Source: Patuone.com

OUR FIRST NATIONAL FLAG DEBATE.... AND OUR FIRST NATIONAL FLAG (MARK I)

The Flag of the United Tribes (Te Kara or The Flag of the Whakaminenga o Ngā Hāpu Aotearoa or The Flag of Te Whakaminenga o Ngā Rangatira).



There is no image of *HMS Alligator*, but *HMS Rattlesnake* was an Atholl class of ship - the same as the *Alligator*. This what the *Alligator* would have looked like. Watercolour, 138 mm x 211 mm. National Maritime Museum, London. 1853. Oswald Walters Brierly (1817-1894)

No question of authority there. Neither Patuone nor McDonnell wanted another run-in with the Sydney port authorities – they were leaving nothing to chance; though things were about to get official...

British resident James Busby arrived in New Zealand in 1833. Busby knew about the seizure of the *Sir George Murray* for violating international law by not flying a national flag – and that no flag basically meant no trade.

Busby looked to the 25-30 independent tribes in the North ‘who exercise separately... all the functions of sovereignty’. Busby was keen to encourage rangatira to act collectively, and in his view a step towards that was for them to select a national flag.

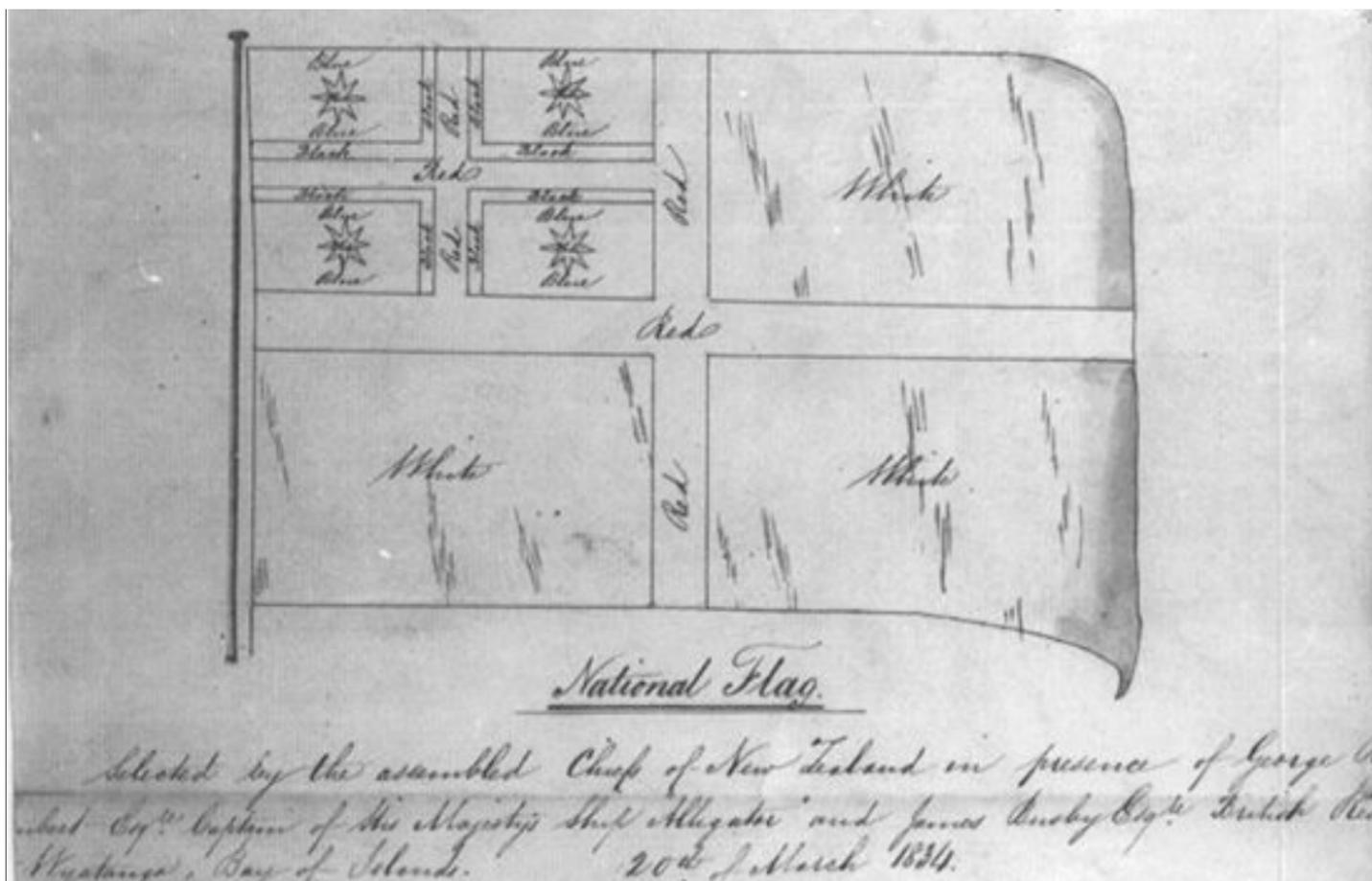
Busby asked missionary Henry Williams to put together some designs for consideration. Williams came up with three options – all featuring the colour red – which was important to Māori.

The chiefs, who had assembled at Waitangi, cast their votes on 20 March 1834 and chose a flag that incorporated many elements of a Church Missionary Society flag – complete with distinctive black fimbriation. *Ngāpuhi Speaks* records this important moment:

“[...]their choice [was] a unique design, “a tailor made design for South Pacific purposes, for Māori purposes” to denote the rangatiratanga of Nū Tirenī. The design came to be known as Te Kara (the colours).”

That same day it was declared the first official flag of New Zealand. *HMS Alligator*, anchored in the Bay, fired a 21-gun salute as our first flag was hoisted up the flagpole.

Source: New Zealand History. <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz>. *Ngāpuhi Speaks* – He Wakaputanga and Te Tiriti o Waitangi; Independent Report on Ngāpuhi Nui Tonu Claim (2012).



New Zealand United Tribes flag,
Drawing, Nicholas Charles Phillips, 1834,
State Library of New South Wales A1955

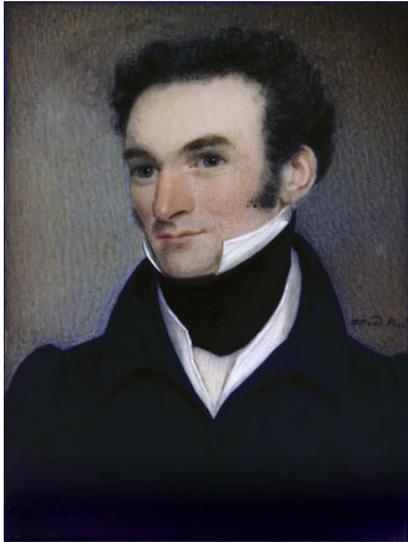
The real Te Kara

The design of Te Kara – the flag selected by the Northern Rangitira, and New Zealand’s first national flag – was captured on paper by an artist who recorded the exact colours, elements and proportions of the different features of the flag in 1834.

This includes the four eight-pointed stars; the black fimbriation (the thin black line that borders the red segment of the flag); and the exact colours of the flag. The reason this is so important is that what was eventually gazetted as the official flag by the Royal Navy was different from what the northern Rangitira selected (see the Maritime flag story below).

Here, though, we have an exact record of what the rangatira voted for. Te Kara – the real Te Kara – is still flown at Waitangi, and can be seen all over Northland as it is flown by descendants of the original Northern rangatira.

Source: <https://teara.govt.nz/en/zoomify/35192/sketch-of-the-united-tribes-flag>



James Busby (left) and Governor Richard Bourke.

Bourke & Busby



James Busby was appointed as British Resident in New Zealand, arriving in the Bay of Islands in 1833.

His 'job description' – given by New South Wales Governor Richard Bourke – was pretty wide-ranging: essentially to protect 'well disposed settlers and traders', to prevent outrages by Europeans against Māori and to apprehend escaped convicts. Easy. The only things Busby lacked were money, troops and legal authority.

It's fair to say Bourke was not a Busby fan, and Busby's appeals for more money did not result in a flow of cash. There was one thing Busby and Bourke did agree on however.

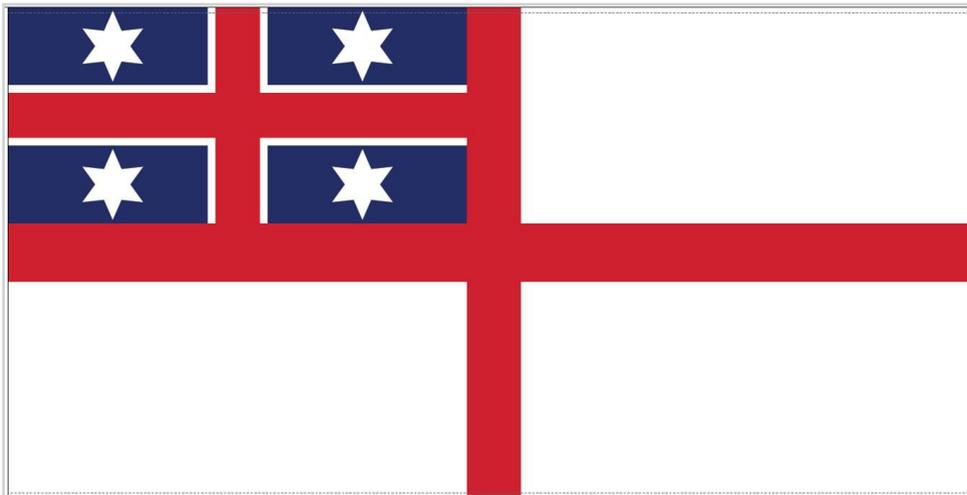
Bourke urged Busby to use the authority of rangatira to steer Māori towards a 'settled form of government'. The aim was to encourage rangatira to eventually accept responsibility to enforce regulations on Māori and Pākehā alike. Busby resolved to commit his 'whole strength' to this initiative and the hui with rangatira was called.

First item on the agenda? Select a national flag.

Besides the obvious need to sort out a trading flag, Busby saw this as a crucial first step towards forming that all-important 'confederation of chiefs'.

Source: <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1b54/busby-james;>

NEW ZEALAND'S FIRST FLAG (MARK II) - MARITIME



The flag that had been chosen by the rangatira at Waitangi was officially sanctioned by the British Government in a letter dated 17 November 1834.

There was a small alteration, however. The description of the flag did not mention the black fimbriation or the number of points on the stars. What was specified was:

“A red St George’s Cross on a white ground. In the first quarter, a red St George’s Cross on a blue ground, pierced with four white stars.”

Ngāpuhi Speaks records the importance of having the national flag:

‘[...] “Te Kara (the flag) was for the purpose of showing we were a nation, recognised as a trading nation, and shall have the freedom to travel in the oceans and waters of other

nations.” As well as symbolising a new international status the new flag gave specific protections to Māori shipping enabling traders based in New Zealand to sail the open seas guaranteed of protection by the recently established East Indies, China, and Pacific Commands of the British Navy.’

The New Zealand Maritime flag differed in having a white border and white six-pointed stars. The red/black/blue colour combination was unacceptable to the British Admiralty.

Source: Te Ara, Encyclopaedia of New Zealand. Ngāpuhi Speaks – He Wakaputanga and Te Tiriti o Waitangi; Independent Report on Ngāpuhi Nui Tonu Claim (2012). Dr John Osbourne, Researcher/Historian.

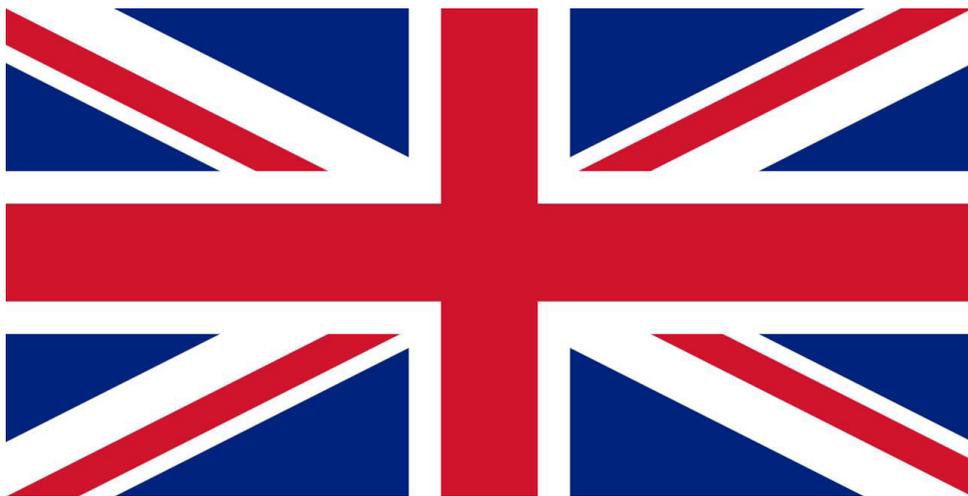


The Trappings of Empire

The flag wasn't just about trade now – it was also about who governed us.

THE UNION FLAG

The Union 'Jack' – or more correctly, the Union Flag (Te Haki).



The Union Flag is the national flag of the United Kingdom and combines the crosses of the countries united under one Sovereign – the kingdoms of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland (though since 1921 only Northern Ireland has been part of the United Kingdom).

The Union Flag comprises the cross of St George, Patron Saint of England (red cross on a white ground); the cross saltire of St Andrew, Patron Saint of Scotland (diagonal white cross on a blue ground); and the cross saltire of St Patrick, Patron Saint of Ireland (diagonal red cross on a white ground).

When the Treaty of Waitangi was signed on 6 February 1840, New Zealand became a British colony, and the Union Flag became the official flag of New Zealand. The new Lieutenant-Governor, William Hobson, removed the flag at Waitangi that had been gazetted in 1835 and replaced it with the Union Flag.

Hobson also removed the New Zealand Company's version of the gazetted flag that was flying in Port Nicholson (Wellington), sending a clear signal that New Zealand was under new management.

Some Māori – including Ngāpuhi rangatira Hōne Heke – believed that Māori should have the right to fly the United Tribes flag alongside the Union Flag as an acknowledgement of their equal status with the Government. Heke's repeated felling of the flagstaff at Kororāreka in 1844-45 was a vivid rejection of the Union Flag as a symbol of British power over Māori.

The Union Flag remained New Zealand's flag until 1902.

Source: New Zealand History - <https://nzhistory.govt.nz>. The Official Website of the British Monarchy — www.royal.gov.uk

THE NZ COMPANY FLAG - ACCEPT NO IMITATIONS



The New Zealand Company – a business enterprise that brought immigrants to New Zealand by the thousands – was operating as early as the 1830s.

Based on Te Kara, this flag was made on board the New Zealand Company ship Tory during its voyage to New Zealand. William Wakefield of the New Zealand Company referred to it as the ‘colours of New Zealand’ when it was raised at Petone in 1839 – though it was different from Te Kara (no black fimbriation for example, and this version had six-pointed stars, rather than eight).

Following the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi on February 6 1840 the Union Jack was adopted by the British as New Zealand’s national flag. Lieutenant Governor William Hobson wasted no time in laying to rest any ‘competing’ flags. Hobson sent an armed group to lower the New Zealand Company version of the flag at Petone, and the next day the Union Jack was raised.

Source: <https://teara.govt.nz/en/object/33578/new-zealand-company-flag-1839>



Historic image of flag, Waitangi flagpole. (Photographer and date unknown).

Source: Photographic Archive. Ref: 1/2-C-8864. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand

TE KARA LOWERED

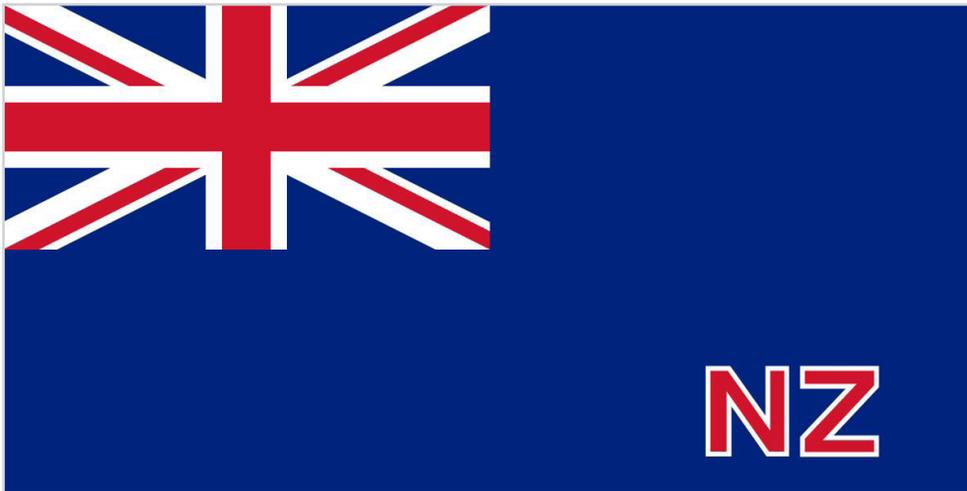
Hobson took the same single-minded approach in Northland, forcibly removing the United Tribes flag from the Bay of Islands after the Treaty was signed.

Hōne Heke believed that Māori should have the right to fly the United Tribes flag alongside the Union Jack in recognition of their equal status with the Government.

Similarly, the hoisting of Te Kara by another rangatira – Tuhawaiki on the island of Ruapuke in Foveaux Strait in 1844 – was another illustration of how some Māori saw this flag as a symbol of Māori independence.

Source: <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/classroom/new-zealands-first-flag-social-studies-activities/new-zealands-first-flag-social-studies-activities>

NAVAL GAZING – OUR FLAG TAKES A NEW TACK



The roots of New Zealand's current flag lie in the United Kingdom's Colonial Naval Defence Act of 1865 – which required all ships owned by a colonial government to fly the Blue Ensign (a Union 'Jack' in the top left corner on a blue background) together with the badge of the colony.

Because New Zealand didn't have an official badge or emblem, we tried to get away with just flying the Blue Ensign. In 1866, however, the government steamers *St Kilda* and *Sturt* were reprimanded by visiting British ships for flying the Blue Ensign without the colony's badge.

The government set out to finalise a suitable emblem. An early idea was to use the seal and the words 'New Zealand' but both were found to be too difficult to work into the design of the Blue Ensign.

In 1867, the Government settled on the abbreviation 'NZ' in lettering with white fimbriation to represent New Zealand on the Blue Ensign.

In 1869, however, this emblem was replaced by an earlier suggestion of the Southern Cross, made up of four red stars with white fimbriation... sound familiar?

Source: New Zealand History - <https://nzhistory.govt.nz>



Seeing Stars

First Lieutenant Albert Markham – the man behind our flag’s design

The New Zealand ensign with its distinctive four stars first made its appearance as a maritime flag, and was designed by First Lieutenant Albert Markham in 1869. The story of its development was recorded in his biography, *The Life of Sir Albert Hastings Markham* published in 1927:

“During his term of service on the Australian Station an incident occurred which had an interesting development and is not generally known. It was the time of the beginning of the New Zealand Marine, which then consisted of a single ship. In quite an informal way Markham was asked if he could suggest a distinctive flag. ‘You have already the right’, he replied, ‘to fly the Blue Ensign, why not add to it the stars of the Southern Cross?’ The suggestion was received with delight.

“A drawing was made on board the *Blanche*, and duly despatched. After a short interval it was returned with an appreciative note, asking that the design might be enlarged, as the stars would hardly shew sufficiently, and accompanied by a parody on Lewis Carroll’s lines: ‘Will you walk a little faster?’ with the refrain — ‘Will you, won’t you, will you, won’t you, magnify the star?’

“The star was accordingly “magnified”, and the flag now floats over the shipping of New Zealand.”

Markham joined the Royal Navy when he was young, and it is recorded that on one occasion at the age of 15 he led a party of six boys and two Marines against a Chinese pirate junk. The pirates abandoned ship.

Markham later became well known as an Arctic explorer – and also known for a particularly embarrassing event that happened when he was Rear-Admiral of the Mediterranean Fleet. During manoeuvres he rammed and sank the flagship of his Commander-in-Chief which, though no doubt a little awkward at the time, did not stop him from being promoted to full Admiral in 1903.

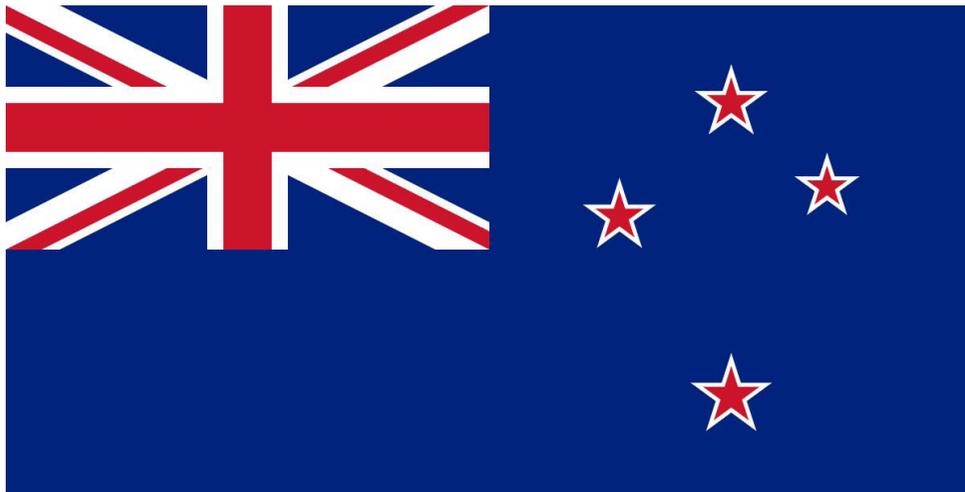
Source: Wikipedia

A close-up photograph of a brick wall. The bricks are dark and weathered. A Union Jack flag is painted across the top half of the wall, and a New Zealand flag is painted across the bottom half. The text 'A flag for New Zealand' is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font. Below the main title, the tagline 'At last - a flag to identify with...' is written in a smaller, lighter font.

A flag for New Zealand

At last - a flag to identify with...

OUR CURRENT FLAG GETS THE NOD



It was 1899, and the South African War had just broken out. Patriotic New Zealanders were keen to do a bit of flag waving – but which one?

The Union Jack was the legal flag of New Zealand. Markham's Southern Cross flag – pretty well the flag we have today – was technically for maritime purposes only, though it had 'jumped' ashore and was increasingly being used on land.

Added to the general confusion was a signalling flag that incorporated a Blue Ensign, but with the addition of the four red stars of the Southern Cross inside a white disc. That, too, was also being flown on public buildings and in commercial advertising, though it was not well liked at the highest levels of Government. Some MPs in Parliament described it variously as 'mutilated', 'an abortion' and even 'a Hennessy's brandy capsule'.

With confusion flying over several flags during a time of hostility and war, when it would have been rather nice to have had a clear national emblem, Premier Richard Seddon introduced the New Zealand Ensign Bill in 1901 to make the Blue Ensign with the stars of the Southern Cross the legal flag of New Zealand. The Governor, the Earl of Ranfurly, proclaimed the flag our national flag on 12 June 1902.

As an aside, because New Zealand's stars are red, they require white fimbriation. The flags on Australia's national flag, however, are white, and therefore do not need fimbriation – a subtle but important difference!

Source: New Zealand History- <https://nzhistory.govt.nz>

DOING PENANTS – VEXOLOGISTS VEXED!

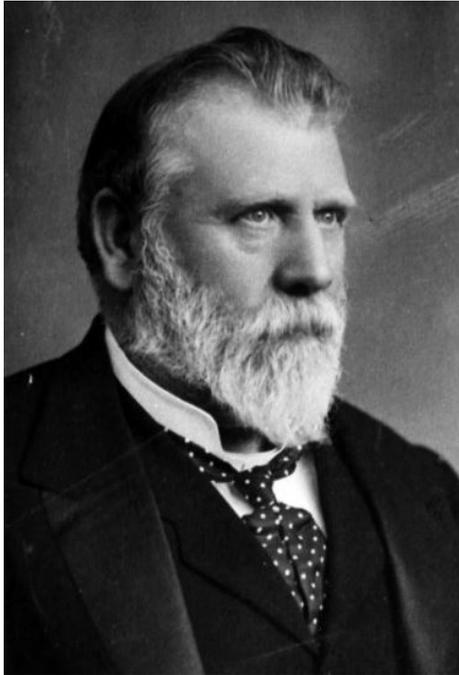
To illustrate the general confusion around which flag is which at the time of the South African War, you need look no further than the commemorative medal which was struck for New Zealand veterans of the conflict.

The flag featured on the medal isn't the Union Jack, or the NZ Ensign – but appears to be yet another variation of Te Kara. Though this one has four five-pointed stars. Yaaaagh!

Just to add to the confusion, in 1899 Premier Richard Seddon sent a Christmas card to troops fighting in South Africa. As you can see, the illustration he chose for the card was what we know now as our New Zealand flag – except at that point it wasn't, because it didn't become our official flag until 1902.

No wonder there was so much confusion!





Seddon (left) and Lord Ranfurly.

Seddon & Ranfurly



The two men behind the New Zealand flag couldn't have been more different.

Lord Ranfurly dated back to the days when Governors were recruited from England's aristocracy and shipped off to far-flung outposts like New Zealand.

Briefings from former Governors to their incoming successors often included such advice as 'don't forget to bring some decent silverware with you'.

When Lord Ranfurly became Governor in 1897 he couldn't help but complain to London about the two Governors' residences – both the one in Wellington and Auckland. The Auckland house he described as being “completely worn out inside and also in such order that it would not be fitting for me as the Representative of Her Majesty to occupy it”. To demonstrate his point he moved into the Northern Club, just up the street.

Richard Seddon, by contrast, was a Lancashire lad who had migrated to New Zealand. A businessman, miner and advocate for miners' rights on the West Coast, Seddon was often mocked

for his lack of polish and the accusation that he was only 'partially civilised'.

That all played into his hands, however. A man known for settling debts with his fists when he was younger, Seddon was a man of the people – an advocate and supporter of everyday working New Zealanders.

By the time Seddon became Premier of New Zealand – the equivalent of Prime Minister – his authority was practically absolute. So much so that people referred to him as 'King Dick' Seddon. Depending on whose side you were on, Seddon was either a tyrant or a 'benign' autocrat.

As we see in Seddon's 1899 Christmas card, he appears to have been quite keen on the design of what became our current flag. You get the feeling he may not have spent much time seeking other people's opinions.

Source: <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/politics/tips-for-governors-general/a-home-away-from-home>
<https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2s11/seddon-richard-john>

THE TINO RANGATIRATANGA FLAG - THE NATIONAL MĀORI FLAG

The Tino Rangatiratanga flag was designed in 1989 by Hiraina Marsden, Jan Dobson and Linda Munn.



(Left) One of the co-designers of the Tino Rangatiratanga flag, Linda Munn.

(Right) The Tino Rangatiratanga flag flying next to the statue of Richard Seddon in front of Parliament in 2004 as part of a hikoi protesting against the Foreshore and Seabed Act.

The black represents Te Kore (the void), the space beyond the world of everyday existence. White represents Te Ao Mārama, the world of light. Red represents coming into being and life, and Papatūānuku, the earth mother. The koru in the centre suggests the unfolding and renewal of life.

In December 2009, Cabinet recognised the Tino Rangatiratanga flag as the national Māori flag of New Zealand. It was chosen after a public consultation process. The Tino Rangatiratanga flag does not have any

official status, but can complement the New Zealand flag on days of national significance.

On Waitangi Day 2010, the Tino Rangatiratanga flag flew from the Auckland Harbour Bridge and at Parliament.

Source: Te Ara, Encyclopaedia of New Zealand .
<http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/photograph/33979/tino-rangatiratanga-flag-linda-munn-2009>

<https://nzhistory.govt.nz/politics/flags-of-new-zealand/Māori-flag>



CONFINED TO THE DUSTBIN OF HISTORY...

Designing flags is a gruelling, thankless task. Here are some 'also ran' New Zealand flags that didn't quite clear the tower...

ONE OF THE PROPOSED FLAGS FOR NEW ZEALAND – 1834

British resident James Busby rejected this option because the missionaries noted, besides the bits in the Union Jack, a ‘total absence of red, a colour to which the New Zealanders are particularly partial and which they are accustomed to consider as indicative of rank’.

THE NEW ZEALAND SIGNALLING FLAG – 1899

Before our current flag was finalised, this flag was occasionally flown in public places, though did not enjoy Government support. One MP described it as ‘mutilated’.

THE KYLE LOCKWOOD FLAG

This flag by architectural designer Kyle Lockwood was voted as the preferred alternative New Zealand flag in the first of two New Zealand flag referenda in December 2015, and was used in the second flag referendum in a binding contest against the current New Zealand flag. In the March 2016 referendum the Lockwood flag gained 43.2% of the vote, while the existing flag won with 56.6% of the vote.

