



William Cargill was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, on 28 August 1784, the son of James Cargill and his wife, Marrion Jamieson. His father, who died of chronic alcoholism when William was 15, was a lawyer of some standing. His death reduced the family to straitened circumstances and ensured that William's mother became the major influence in his life. A woman of strong character who managed to give her four sons a grammar school education and launch them on successful careers, she came from a well-to-do family who helped her through her difficulties.

Probably on 18 April 1813, at Oporto, Portugal, William Cargill married Mary Ann Yates, the daughter of an English naval officer and a London actress. The marriage was extremely fruitful; there were 17 children, of whom 10 survived infancy. Cargill sold his commission in 1820 for £1,500, but continued to use the title Captain for the rest of his life. He was a wine merchant in Edinburgh from 1820 to 1834, but the main support for the burgeoning family appears to have been the eldest son, William Walter. In 1841 Cargill joined the Oriental Bank Corporation in London.

Cargill sailed from Gravesend with 96 others on board the 622 ton *John Wickliffe*. The promised salary of £500 as New Zealand Company agent had apparently ended his financial

worries for good.

The *John Wickliffe* arrived in Otago on 23 March 1848 without any loss of passengers. After the only really impressive oration of his career, in which Cargill compared the Otago pioneers to the pilgrim fathers, the work of colonising began in earnest. Numerous problems beset the new settlement, especially after the arrival of the *Philip Laing* with its 246 passengers on 15 April. In spite of Rennie's advocacy little had been done to prepare the way, and the fledgling settlement was almost crippled by the absence of a wharf and adequate roads. A harsh, wet winter compounded these problems. Progress was further stifled by constant bickering between the Scots majority, many of whom were orthodox Presbyterians rather than Free Church adherents, and the English minority. Even though Cargill had married an Anglican and most of the landowners were Anglican, the old Captain never seemed to forget that the episcopal church in Scotland was tainted by its Jacobite associations. Consequently he waged a bitter war of words on the supposed 'little enemy', the very group who should have been his main allies and natural leaders of the settlement.

Little physical advancement occurred, in fact, until the arrival of the younger and more adventurous James Macandrew in 1851. Still, Cargill's tenacity and patriarchal style of leadership proved vital in helping the struggling settlement to survive problems of chronic isolation, the unsuitability of the land for arable farming and the withdrawal of New Zealand Company support in 1850. His election as foundation superintendent of the province in 1853 reflected the respect in which the majority of settlers held the crusty old soldier. His very Scottishness and his personal style which so amused English observers and infuriated government officials only added to his appeal among the Scots settlers.

The Otago of the late 1850s was a far cry from Wakefield's ideal of a class settlement based on intensive grain farming. Pastoralism provided the engine of development as in the other Wakefield settlements. Many labourers but few middle class persons of capital came to the settlement. There was also a rough, boozy, proletarian element, who paid no heed to Cargill's condemnations of their far from genteel behaviour.

On the other hand Cargill was successful in maintaining a reasonable balance between men and women, and between families and single people. As a result Otago was law abiding by colonial standards and many migrants improved their position. Similar settlements in New Zealand and Australia struggled much longer or failed altogether. Cargill's tenacious leadership was vital to Otago's modest success. It was already a functioning settlement with established political structures by the time that the discovery of gold accelerated the pace of development.

Cargill died on 6 August 1860, of a stroke. Two of his sons, John and Edward Bowes, became successful pastoralists. His large family became something of an Otago dynasty.

Cargill's death before the advent of the goldrushes was fortunate. He would not have died content had he seen thousands of rough, democratically minded miners arrive to dismember the Wakefield ideal. Macandrew, a man imbued with nineteenth century entrepreneurial ideals, was much better suited to lead a province caught up in the rush to be rich, than a man intent on founding a religious and orderly pre-industrial community in the farthest corner of the earth.

William Cargill is buried under an imposing memorial in Dunedin's Southern Cemetery.

Prepared by the Historic Cemeteries Conservation Trust of New Zealand from the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* contribution by Tom Brooking