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Rediscovery of a bust of Ferdinand Ritter von Hochstetter

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Abstract

The provenance of a 19th century plaster replica bust of Ferdinand Ritter von Hochstetter (1829–1884) at the Auckland War Memorial Museum (AWMM) is discussed. Early 20th century newspaper records, original Museum paper records and other research were used to point to a likely original source. While Museum digital data recognised that the bust was of Hochstetter no other information was known.

Keywords

Hochstetter; Auckland Museum; Julius von Haast; bust.

INTRODUCTION

Much has been written about the enormous contributions of the German geologist Ferdinand von Hochstetter to New Zealand science and his time here between 1858 and 1859 (e.g., Kermodé 1992; Johnston & Nolden 2011; Johnston, Nolden & Hoke 2012; Nolden & Nolden 2013). The Auckland War Memorial Museum has had a bust of Hochstetter in its collections since 1919 (Fig. 1) but the provenance was apparently lost. It is proposed that the AWMM bust originally belonged to the Reverend Dr Arthur Guyon Purchas.

In April 1857 the Austro-Hungarian naval frigate SMS *Novara* left Trieste in the Adriatic on a two-year global scientific voyage. She was authorised to do so by Archduke Maximilian I and commanded by Bernhard von Wüllerstorff-Urbair. On board with other scientists was a young 28-year-old geologist Christian Gottlieb Ferdinand Hochstetter (later Ferdinand Ritter von Hochstetter when he was knighted) from Esslingen near Stuttgart. Hochstetter had been employed by the Imperial Geological Research Institute (the Geologische Reichsanstalt) since 1852 and had an established reputation. When Hochstetter arrived in Auckland on the 22 December 1858 he would have had no idea that he was to spend the next nine months in New Zealand and the enormous impact he would have on our geological and natural history knowledge.

Significantly a day before the *Novara* arrived another German, Johann Franz Julius Haast (later Sir Julius von Haast, 1822–1887), reached Auckland on the SS *Evening Star*. Hochstetter and Haast soon met up, shared many adventures together over the next few months and became lifelong friends (Nolden 2013). Haast remained in New Zealand after Hochstetter left from Nelson in

October 1859 and went on to an illustrious career in Canterbury, founding the Canterbury Museum among other things (Maling 1990).

While in Auckland, Hochstetter quickly made many friends and relied on their local knowledge to guide his explorations. One of these was the polymath Reverend Arthur Guyon Purchas (1821–1906). Purchas was a founding member of the Auckland Institute in 1867, a Council member for many years and President in 1880. He had discovered the Drury Coalfield near Auckland in 1858 (Hochstetter 1867; Kear 1959), and the Provincial Government was keen to survey it. Purchas was instrumental in persuading Hochstetter to stay in New Zealand (Hochstetter 1867a: 11) and survey the field (Hochstetter 1859).

Hochstetter clearly had great respect for Purchas as shown by the following (Hochstetter 1867: 258).

Captain Wing, the obliging pilot of Manukau Harbour, had offered me his excellent whale boat, for a cruise upon the waters of the Manukau, and promised to accompany me with my friends, the Rev. Mr. Purchas and Captain Ninnis of Onehunga. Our place of rendez-vous was Onehunga. I had made my appearance there two days previous, for the purpose of roaming, in company of Mr. Purchas, over the environs of the town. Before I begin to describe the country, I may be allowed to dedicate a few lines to the cherished memory of that noble-hearted man. Endowed with an extraordinary talent of observation, and exerting himself with an untiring zeal and energy in the most different directions, Mr. Purchas has rendered great services to the colony by the share, justly due to him, in the discovery and management of the coalfields in the vicinity

of Auckland, as well as by the invention of a new method of preparing from the leaves of *Phormium tenax*, the well-known New Zealand flax, so highly valued for its durability and tenacity. That worthy man attends with equal credit to his spiritual functions; and Onehunga is indebted to him for a beautiful school-house built of massive basalt-stone. In his agreeable company I spent many a pleasant day, and in the circle of his amiable family I passed many a happy evening. Whenever I went to visit the cheerful parsonage, homely situated in a small garden, I was always certain to meet with some little surprise; for the children also, after the example of their energetic parent, rivalled each other in industry for collecting curiosities, and had always something reserved for me, such as butterflies, beetles, or shells. Thus I am indebted to his family for many friendly services and also for valuable contributions to my collections.

Hochstetter apparently stayed in touch with Purchas and what he was doing until the end of his life (e.g., Nolden 2013: 205). Apart from the Hochstetter bust discussed in this paper, AWMM also has a plaster bust of Purchas (Accession no. 1965.78.530) made by his daughter Gertrude W. Purchas in 1890 and possibly inspired by Hochstetter's bust.

NEW INFORMATION

I first became aware that a bust of Hochstetter had been donated to the Auckland Institute and Museum when researching the early Curators of the Museum and accidentally came across an article in the *New Zealand Herald*, May 1919. In those days significant donations to the Museum were reported monthly through the local broadsheets. The piece mentioned donations by a 'Dr C. Purchas', including 16 Egyptian curios (including a bronze statuette of Isis and the infant Horus and a canopic jar lid (AWMM Catalogue nos 13158 & 13148) and a plaster bust of 'Dr Hochstetter'. Dr C. Purchas was Arthur Challinor Purchas (1860–1941), one of the four sons and six daughters of Hochstetter's friend, the Reverend Dr Arthur Guyon Purchas. He was an ophthalmic surgeon and a Major in the Medical Corps of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force during WWI serving in the Middle East.

I then searched the AWMM Collections online website and was rewarded at that time by a single image of a bust said to be of Hochstetter (catalogue no. M1963). Further enquiries revealed that no other data was available apart from the fact that the bust was originally part of the Geology Collection and then transferred to the Applied Arts Department at about the time the first addition to the Museum's Domain site was being completed in the late 1960's. A further search of the Annual Reports of the Auckland Museum and Institute for 1918–19 and 1919–1920 revealed 'an interesting collection of 16 Egyptian antiquities' from Dr A.C. Purchas (AIM Annual Report 1919–20: 10, 27), but curiously the bust is not mentioned. There is also

no mention of it in the handwritten accession records for 1918–19 or 1919–20. However, the AMI Letter-book contains a letter from the Curator Thomas Cheeseman to Dr A.C. Purchas (Letter-book 5: 1909–1920; MUS-1996-6-5) dated 2/6/1919. The letter thanks Purchas for the donation of '17 Egyptian articles, also of a plaster bust of Dr. Hochstetter and the barometer used by him'.

Some of the Egyptian objects are on display in the Ancient Worlds Gallery. The reference to the barometer is intriguing since it is not mentioned in the Herald article nor the Annual Reports of the time. If it really is the barometer used by Hochstetter during his explorations to measure altitude then it would be the Gay-Lussac type barometer made by Heinrich Kappeller, Wien (as seen from similar barometers by Kappeller online it will be clearly marked) and loaned to him by the Imperial Austrian Geological Survey (Kaiserlich Königliche Geologische Reichsanstalt, Wien), No.10 (see Hochstetter 1864: 187). To date no barometer matching these details has been found in the AWMM Collections.

The AWMM bust (Fig. 1) has traces of the original title, Ferd. R. v. Hochstetter (Ferdinand Ritter von Hochstetter). Ritter, meaning rider or horseman in Middle High German (and *ridder* in Middle Dutch) is the equivalent of hence the English title of Knight. Ritter von in this case refers to the hereditary knighthood bestowed on Hochstetter by the Austrian Emperor (Franz Joseph I) in 1884, the same year Hochstetter died (Fleming 1990).

OTHER HOCHSTETTER BUSTS

Additional internet searches revealed a full-sized plaster version of the Hochstetter bust at the Museum of Natural History Vienna (Naturhistorisches Museum Wien) (Fig. 2B) and another in bronze at the grave of Hochstetter and his wife Georgiana (née Bengough) at the Vienna Central Cemetery (Wiener Zentralfriedhof) (Fig. 2C). The Museum of Natural History plaster bust was commissioned by the Viennese Geographical Society as part of their jubilee in 1881 (Nolden 2013: 204) before Hochstetter's death in 1884. The name of the sculptor, Viktor Oskar Tilgner (1844–1896), is on the back of the bust (see images at <http://objekte.nhm-wien.ac.at/objekt/th337/ob336>).

Hochstetter reported to Haast that the smaller copies were being made in April 1882 (Nolden 2013: 206). The smaller scale busts (42 x 28 cm) could be purchased for a subscription of 'at least 10 gulden' and were widely distributed (Nolden 2013: 204). When Hochstetter's body was moved in the early 20th century from a Protestant cemetery on the outskirts of Vienna to the more prominent Wiener Zentralfriedhof the bronze version was made (pers comm. S. Nolden) and is very likely derived from the plaster original.

Hochstetter writing to Haast in August 1882 said he is sending him four copies of the bust (one full size and three smaller) (Nolden 2013: 208). The full size bust appears to now be in Canterbury Museum and was purchased by subscription in 1883 (Accession no. CM C1883.9, pers comm. P. Scofield). The whereabouts of the three small busts is unknown. It is possible that one



Figure 1. Plaster replica bust of Ferdinand Ritter von Hochstetter, c.1882. Auckland Museum M1963 © Auckland Museum CC BY.

was sent onto Purchas by Haast but it is equally likely that one was gifted to Purchas by Hochstetter (or his wife Georgiana) or that Purchas bought one by subscription himself. Whatever the scenario, this means either two or three busts are missing.

John Steele (pers comm.), author of a recent major biography of A.G. Purchas (Steele 2019), is not aware of a direct connection between Purchas and the bust.

In 2008 Hochstetter expert, Sascha Nolden, put together at the Auckland Library an exhibition marking the 150th anniversary of Hochstetter coming to New Zealand (Nolden 2008). Unfortunately, he was unaware at the time that busts of Hochstetter existed in New Zealand, let alone in Auckland. He carried, as hand luggage, another half-sized copy of the bust (Fig. 2A) on loan from the Geological Survey of Austria to New Zealand and then back again (pers comm. S. Nolden, 2020). The AWM example is identical apart from condition (see Figs 1 & 2A) and a thicker basal wooden plinth apparently partially filled with a curious cement presumably to add weight to the base.

ORIGINS OF THE HOCHSTETTER BUSTS

Because of the striking similarities I originally thought the bust might have been modelled from the photograph of Hochstetter (Fig. 2E, but without glasses for obvious reasons) taken by Victor Angerer, Wien (1839–1894). The photograph was probably taken in the early 1880's (pers comm. S. Jovanovic-Kruspel, 2020). However, research by Sascha Nolden on the correspondence of Julius von Haast reveals that the sculptor Victor Tilgner writing to Haast

(dated 19 May 1885) states that “*Weil ich ein Lebensgroßes Modell seinerzeit nach der Natur modellirt habe*”. This broadly translates as “*Because I created a life-sized model from life at the time*” (pers comm. S. Nolden, 2022). Also of a similar vintage to the photograph is a portrait (Fig. 2D) by Franz Rumpler (1845–1922) dated 1882 which itself is interesting in that it shows Hochstetter’s fondness and connection to New Zealand right to the end. Hochstetter is surrounded by things Maori with a carved figure behind him and his right hand resting on a Māori cloak, a *wakahuia* and a *pounamu tiki*. The *tiki* is possibly that obtained by him from a Mrs Lewis from Cannstatt, Stuttgart in 1882 (see Nolden 2013: 207).

CONCLUSION

Without supporting papers or letters between Arthur Guyon Purchas and Hochstetter or Haast or from within the Purchas family, it is not possible to definitively state that the AWM bust originally belonged to the Reverend Dr Arthur Guyon Purchas. However, for the present this is the most likely provenance of the AWM bust as part of Purchas’ enduring friendship with Hochstetter who he survived by another 12 years.

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Figure 2. A) Half-size replica plaster bust borrowed from Austria by S. Nolden for Auckland Library exhibition in 2008. B) Full-sized plaster bust at the Naturhistorisches Museum Wien. C) Full-sized bronze bust at the Wiener Zentralfriedhof, early 20th century. D) Portrait with Māori artefacts, 1882. E) Photograph from the early 1880s.

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