



KETTLE, Charles Henry

(1820–62).

Surveyor, explorer, and politician.

Charles Henry Kettle was born in 1820 at Sandwich in Kent. He received a good education and became a mathematics master at Faversham School, Kent. In 1839 he decided to emigrate to the New Zealand Company's incipient settlement at Port Nicholson, and arrived there in the *Oriental* on 31 January 1840. Kettle joined the New Zealand Company's survey staff under Mein Smith who put his mathematical accomplishments to good use. For the next two years he explored and surveyed at Wellington, Hutt, and Porirua districts. In May 1842 Kettle and Alfred Wills made a notable exploration, crossing the Tararuas from the west side into the Wairarapa, and then traversing the Rimutakas to Port Nicholson.

In the following year Kettle returned to England where he became interested in George Rennie's proposals for the establishment of a Scottish colony in southern New Zealand. He visited Edinburgh with Rennie and noted its features in anticipation of their partial application to the proposed "New Edinburgh" site in New Zealand. In due course the New Zealand Company appointed Kettle as surveyor and civil engineer for a three-year period. Shortly before leaving England he married Amelia Omer, and the young couple sailed for New Zealand in the *Mary Catherine* which arrived at Otago Harbour on 23 February 1846.

The Otago Block, extending from Otago Harbour to Nugget Point (a little south of the modern Balclutha) had been purchased by the Government in 1844 on the recommendation of the New Zealand Company's Surveyor, Frederick Tuckett. Tuckett's successor, William Davison, had surveyed a portion of the harbour and the neighbouring coastline before Kettle's arrival. Kettle, however, was the organiser and supervisor of the first effective survey of most of the Otago Block. The work in the Otago Harbour area was done for the most part by Kettle and his assistants, while the rural and suburban surveys were let out to contractors. Late in 1846, when the plans of the port town of Koputai (later Port Chalmers) were finished, Kettle moved his headquarters and residence to Dunedin, then little more than a wilderness, at the head of the harbour. Here, despite difficult topography, Kettle and his assistants laid out the

future town and, by the time the first settlers arrived from Scotland in March 1848, the survey was almost completed.

In 1851 Kettle made two inland expeditions while inspecting lands for settlement west of the Otago Block and contributed considerably to the exploration of the province. In 1854 he took up land as a sheep farmer in the Clutha district but returned to Dunedin in 1860. In the following year he was elected to the House of Representatives as member for Bruce, and in 1862 J. L. C. Richardson appointed him Provincial Auditor for Otago. Kettle died at his home, "Littlebourne", Dunedin, on 5 June 1862, a victim of the typhoid epidemic caused by the city's lack of sanitation following its sudden expansion during the gold-rush era.

In the early years of the Otago Scottish Free Church Settlement, when the official class in Dunedin – mainly Englishmen – were at logger-heads with the Scots who dubbed them the "Little Enemy", Kettle, a staunch Anglican, faced much hostility. But he gradually lived this down and was in time regarded by the community as a man of mark. On the occasion of his death on 5 June 1862, in Dunedin, aged 43 years, the *Otago Colonist* paid him this tribute: "He had a most liberal, enlightened mind, and his christianity was full of charity to his fellow men, and singularly free from every particle of bigotry or narrow sectarianism."

He is buried in a family plot in Dunedin's Southern Cemetery.