

Marsden's observation regarding the Thames River

General Observations respecting the River Thames

Amongst other things I have noticed, it may not be uninteresting to state my Sentiments of the River Thames, and of the land on its banks, and in its neighbourhood, as an agricultural Settlement where the Arekee or head Chief resides. It is situated about One Hundred Miles, or, perhaps more from point Rodney, the Entrance of the Thames. I should call Rowpah the Head of the Thames. here the river divides itself into two branches of equal size. The one runs to the right, and the other to the left. At Rowpah there is sufficient water for small vessels, that does not draw more than Six or seven feet. The Tide runs up a few miles above this Settlement. I went ten or twelve miles up the right hand branch in a Canoe when the water became shallow, and the river opened into an extensive plain. I have little doubt, but this branch of the river has its source in natural Springs which rise in this plain - The left hand branch I traced much further by land; and found that after running thro' deep Glens, craggy Rocks it had its Source in natural Springs which rose in a Similar plain, that extended to the borders of Mercury Bay. On or near the banks both of the main river and the two Branches which form the River, there are large Forrests of Timber of various Kinds, and very lofty but generally of the Cyprus kind. They extend with but little interruption for forty or fifty miles. I also observed several small navigable branches, which run into the interior in passing along the main River. There is every kind of Timber convenient that could be wanted for building Houses, and all Agricultural purposes. The Land in general is very Rich, and would produce the Heaviest Crops of Grain, and there are hundreds

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of Acres on its banks which might with little trouble be Cultivated with the Plough; as the whole is completely free from stones, and a light rich soil. In many places I observed the river in heavy rains overflowed its banks; but the water cannot remain upon the ground any time from the free outlet it has into the Sea, nor did it appear to rise very high. The River is near eight or Ten Miles wide, where the fresh water falls into the Salt. I inquired of the [f] Natives if the river ever overflowed its banks, when they informed me it did in the rainy Season; but that the water never remained one day upon the Land. I was inclined to credit this Account as they planted the Banks with Potatoes in various places, and I observed they were not destroyed. And in some places I noticed the Native Huts standing near the Edge of the water, and not swept away. As the Land in general is very level, as well as the banks of the River, something similar to the Thames in England, and the low land in Kent and Essex, there are many Swamps which would require to be drained, before the Ground could be converted either into feeding pastures, or the production of Grain. However at the present there is abundance of Land sufficiently dry to support a large Population, if brought into Cultivation. As an eligible Situation for an extensive Agricultural Settlement, it commands many other local advantages; such as fire wood, plenty of thatch for Houses, and native flax for Rope or lines without end. Together with Shell and other Kinds of Fish in the greatest abundance. There is a considerable population which would by their Labour when furnished with proper Tools contribute to the general good. I have no doubt but the Chiefs would be very ready to locate portions of their

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Lands to any Europeans who would settle amongst them. The natives have not the means to cultivate their Land. They have neither Tools nor seed to put in the Ground. The most they can produce is a potatoe or Cabbage - and they never can extend their operations of Agriculture further without the proper means. The above observations apply only to the fresh water River and the Land on its banks. The banks of the Salt water river are very high and only small portions of land in the Coves can be conveniently cultivated. The River is also wide and open to the Sea tho' more than 30 Miles from it that Ships in the winter Season cannot Anchor with perfect Safety in it. There is a good harbour on the East side of the River about Twenty Miles from the fresh water where any Ships may lay in perfect Safety; and where I left His Majestys Ship The Coromandel. Upon the whole, I have seen no situation in New Zealand to be compared to the River Thames, or the banks of the fresh water, for an extensive and advantageous Agricultural Settlement - On the west side of the Thames at a settlement called Magoea up the River, named the Wyeroa [f] about 30 or 40 Miles from the Thames, into which the Wyeroa falls, there is exceeding fine Land and a great Population, This Land is not liable to be flooded, and from the nature of its Soil can be cultivated at little expence. The Natives grow immense quantities of Potatoes, which with Fish is their principal food. The above remarks will be sufficient to give you an idea of the Thames, and what it will more than probably rise to in length of time.- I hope the Period is near at Hand, when those extensive plains will stand thick with Corn, and the lofty Pines break forth into Singing and the voice of Joy and Gladness be heard in the dwellings

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of those poor Heathens, who are now literally sitting in darkness and the Shadow of Death.

The Names of the Principal Chiefs at the Thames.

Tow-a-ma		E-Nakkee	
Tippookee		Terranghee	West
Towhookee	East	To-too-hee	Side —
Towretta	Side		
A-Moppa			

Samuel Marsden