

INTERESTING ITEMS FROM THE COLLECTION

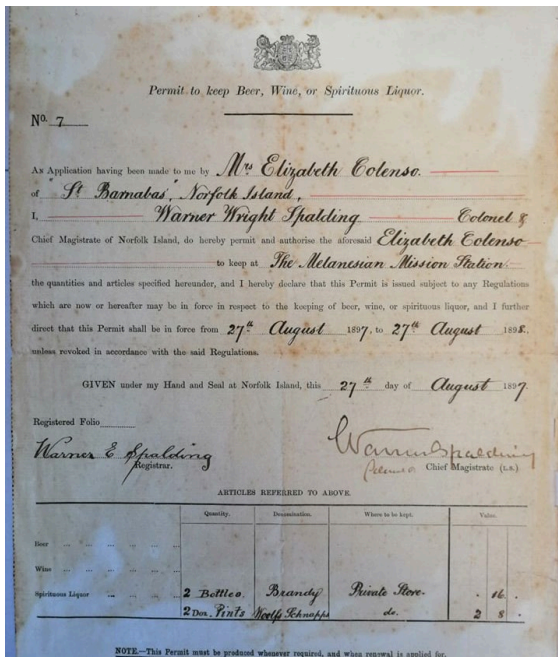


Image 1: No.7 Permit to keep Beer, Wine, or Spirituous Liquor' (NIM23035)

If you like keeping a bottle of your favourite drink at home, spare a thought for the Islanders in the 1800s as the distribution of alcohol was strictly controlled and regulated on Norfolk Island. A commissioner Henry Wilkinson who completed a report on Norfolk Island 1885 noted all alcohol had to be obtained from the Magistrate and only with a doctor's order. Wilkinson noted that although he had not seen one intoxicated person on the Island he suspected Islanders traded with whalers to obtain extra supplies. However, official exceptions do exist, such as this week's interesting item which is an 1897 'Permit to keep Beer, Wine, or Spirituous Liquor'.

The permit was made out to Mrs Elizabeth Colenso authorizing her to keep alcohol on the Melanesian Mission premise for 12 months. Colenso was only keeping 2 bottles of Brandy and 2 doz pints of Wolfs Schnapps. Clearly the permit was required for even small quantities of alcohol which demonstrated the extent authorities attempted to govern private use. Furthermore, the permit was issued in August and is only No.7 indicating there were not many

permits issued in a year. The permit was signed by the magistrate who was Colonel W.E Spalding at the time.

Mrs Colenso had a long background in missionary work in New Zealand Maori communities and in 1875 was requested by Rev. John Selwyn to join the Melanesian Mission on Norfolk Island. She stayed until 1898 being a house mother of many Melanesian Mission girls, regularly helping sew student clothing, translate scripture into Mota, teach classes and even regularly baked the bread for the mission. During these years Mrs Colenso suffered from rheumatism, it remains unclear if the alcohol was for Mrs Colenso personally or if it was for the Mission's medical and baking needs.



Image 2: Close-up of Mrs Colenso and Mrs Colenso and Melanesian Mission students (NIM1851) circa 1896

The permit also includes the Coat of Arms for the United Kingdom and a watermark that shows lady Britannia with a shield. This document belongs to the Les Brown Collection and if you would like to view this item, the Colenso photograph albums or other Melanesian Mission material in the Norfolk Island Museum Trust collection please feel free to ring 23788 or email us at info@museums.gov.nf to organize a time.



Image 2: Close-up of United Kingdom's Coat of Arms (NIM23035)

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