

Ferdinand von Hochstetter :

In perusing early Auckland newspapers for items dealing with the Hochstetter expedition we came across the following note of a Hochstetter discovery not hitherto recorded in the scientific literature -

## NEWS OF THE EXPLORING EXPEDITION

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It cannot be considered unfair to anticipate a report, which is expected to be published on the completion of the Scientific Exploration now going on in the interior, by making known a few singular discoveries, which cannot fail to interest, if they do not even startle the reader. To begin with a little incident at starting. Before embarking for a voyage up the Waikato from the new village of Havelock, at Maungatawhiri, one of the party, on striking his tent, turned up what appeared to be a piece of obsidian or volcanic glass, flat and circular. On cleaning the surface, however, it proved to be an artificial, and not a natural production. For certain characters naturally developed themselves which were, on close examination, neither Runic nor Cuneiform—but Roman. The following letters were, after some pains, clearly deciphered :—

HO ES LO DO GN

Now, what could this mean? No stretch of the imagination could lead one to suppose that the Romans ever visited these remote islands. And yet the Latin word *Hospes* was clearly enough implied by the first letters. H was probably a memento of those early Spanish navigators who have left the traces of their visit here by the names *perro* and *puerca*, for dog and pig, engrafted on the Native language. There was no date. Before leaving this tantalizing subject, it may be as well to state that one of the party expressed his firm belief that it was nothing more than the bottom of a bottle stamped "Hodge's London Gin."

(Southern Cross 5 April 1859)

Alan Mason