



# DESPATCHES

*Newsletter of the Queen's Redoubt Trust*

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## SERIES ON BRITISH UNITS AT QUEEN'S REDOUBT

This is the third in a series on the various British Army units which had anything to do with Queen's Redoubt. This issue continues with the examination of those Regiments that were involved with building the Redoubt or the Great South Road. The 14th, Buckinghamshire Regiment of Foot, were in New Zealand from 1860 to 1866.

### 2ND BATTALION, 14<sup>TH</sup> REGIMENT "THE OLD AND BOLD"

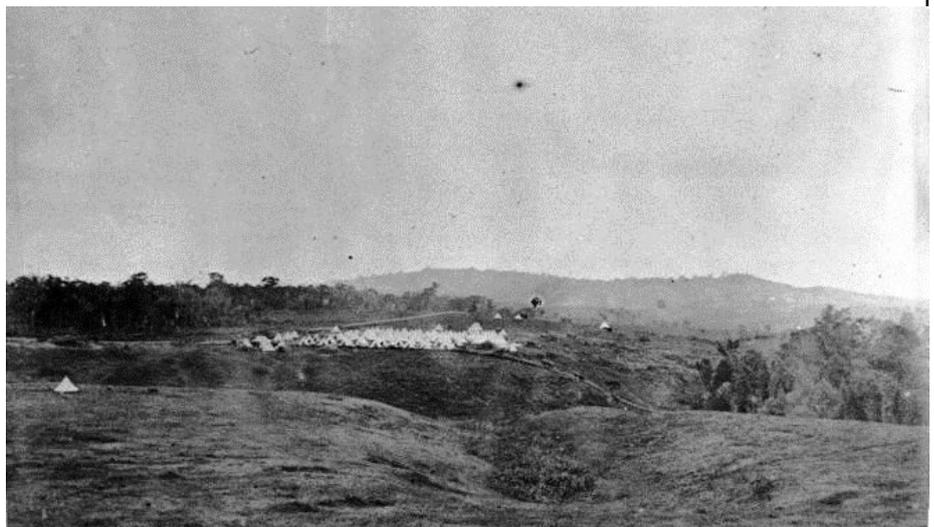
The 2nd battalion, despite being part of the Buckinghamshire Regiment, was raised at Mullingar in Westmeath, Ireland, in 1857. By 1860, led by Col Sir J E Alexander, it was based at Curragh Camp, near Dublin. In August 1860, they received orders to proceed to New Zealand. The Head Quarters and five companies (520 officers and men) departed on steam ship Robert Lowe on the 6 September, arriving in Auckland on 29 November. The second detachment, of about 600 officers and men under Major Dwyer departed on the sailing ship Boanerges on the 12 September, arriving on the 22 December; with the final company of 114 officers and men under Captain Vivian leaving on the sailing ship Sevilla on 20 October arriving in Auckland on 26 February 1861. Two companies under Major Douglas went immediately to Taranaki and took part in several engagements there, returning to the north in June 1861. Two companies were sent to Wellington and a further two to Napier but, by November 1861, all detached companies were back in Auckland. At this time the whole regiment was employed in constructing the Great South Road between Drury and Pokeno and remained on this work until early 1863. In August

1862 the commander of the regiment, Lt Col Sir James Alexander, returned to England for family reasons and was succeeded by Lt Col Charles Austen who had transferred to the 14<sup>th</sup> from the 83<sup>rd</sup> Regiment.

On 17<sup>th</sup> July Lt Col Austen, who had led the 14<sup>th</sup> Regiment across the Mangatawhiri to begin the invasion on 12<sup>th</sup> July, noted Maori forces digging trenches across the Koheroa ridge and led his battalion out to challenge them. In the subsequent skirmish Col Austen was wounded in the arm. This proved to be minor and he returned to active duty within a few weeks, although he would not have accompanied the force of almost 900 men which made a futile advance on Paparata Pa on 1 August. The next major offensive took place on the 20 November when 184 men of the 14<sup>th</sup>, led by Col Austen attacked the east end of Rangiriri Pa. The 12<sup>th</sup> and

14<sup>th</sup> regiments skirmishing up to the fortification to pin down the defenders on the east side and prevent them from escaping to the Waikare Swamp. Getting to within 15 yards of the Pa the troops laid down and commenced firing which was returned from the central redoubt as well as the trenches running down to the lake. The 14<sup>th</sup> lost two officers, Colonel Austen and Lt Phelps, hit while close to the Pa and directing the fire of the men. The two regiments were effectively pinned down but succeeded in preventing many Maori from escaping to Lake Waikare. (14<sup>th</sup> Regt letter book). Lt Phelps died of his wounds as did Lt Col Austen and was succeeded by Lt Col Trevor.

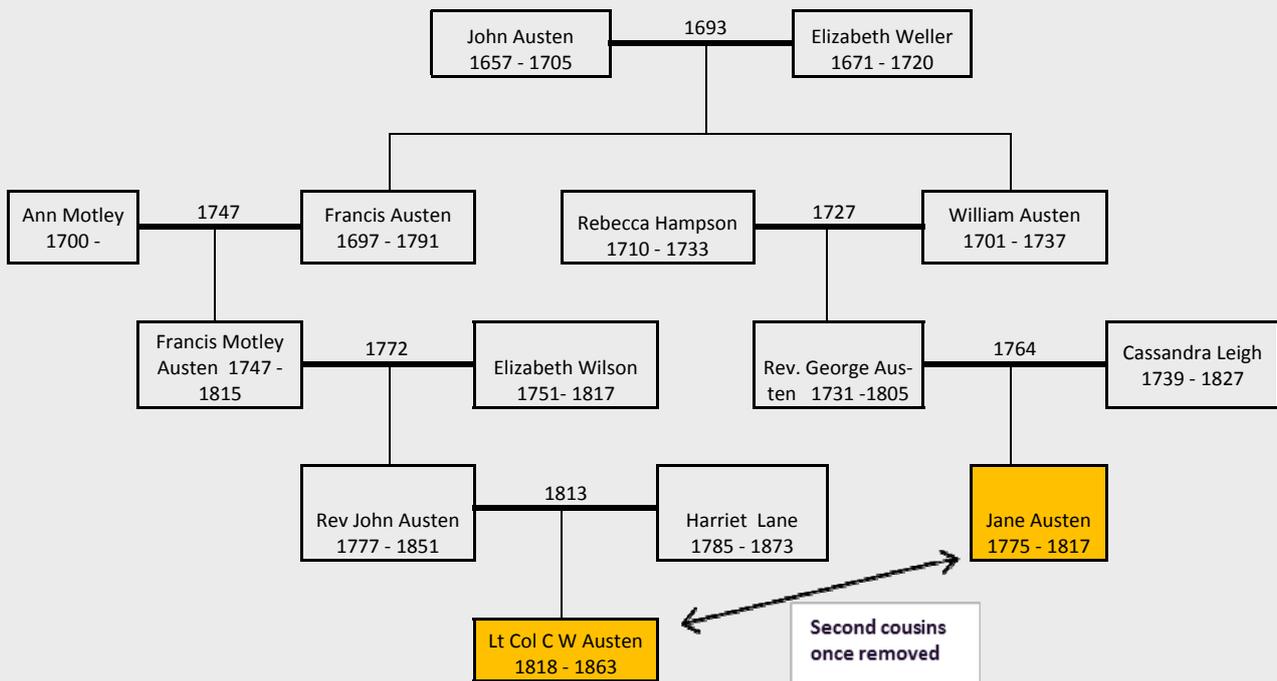
G H Cope was a Lieutenant in the 14<sup>th</sup> during its time in New Zealand. He later wrote for his family, but did not publish, an account of his life. A copy of this was presented to the Regimental Ar-



**14th Regiment camp at Selby's Farm, Pokeno -early 1862**

**The Trust always needs more active members, so please contact Ian Barton:- 09 239 2049, if you have an interest in the project.**

**Fig 1 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN Lt Col C W AUSTEN and the NOVELIST JANE AUSTEN**



**40t Regiment (cont)**

chives by one of his descendants. In it he spoke of frequent visits to the Regiment by the Bishop of New Zealand, George Selwyn. Selwyn appeared to be very well liked by the British Army personnel but was also a strong supporter of the Maori viewpoint and consequently was not liked by most of the settlers. One evening the Bishop was present in the Officers Mess when Lt Phelps, spoke disparagingly of the Maori - referring to them as barbarians. When Selwyn asked why he called them so, Phelps answered that men who lived in the woods and ate with their fingers must certainly be barbarians. The Bishop broke a piece of bread and asked Phelps if he thought him a barbarian for eating the bread with his fingers. Phelps, who knew of the Bishop's work amongst the Maori, could only apologise.

The activities of the 14<sup>th</sup> after Rangiriri are a little difficult to disentangle from the general narrative of the war. It appears that the regiment was often broken into company groups which served in many different places. They did not go up the Waikato as did many other regiments but often remained on garrison duties at different places. A small number of 14<sup>th</sup> veterans were

part of a moveable column, made up of top troops from several regiments, at Gate Pa.

They next appear in action in Taranaki, at Weraroa and Areiahi, in July 1865, while General Cameron was in Auckland. Governor Grey, visiting Taranaki at the time and conveniently forgetting he was no longer an active military officer, led an attack by Imperial and Colonial forces against these positions which resulted in Hauhau warriors being taken prisoner or fleeing. This usurpation of the General's position caused the already bad relations between Grey and Cameron to become even worse! In December two companies of the 14<sup>th</sup> joined other regiments, a Royal Artillery unit, a 300 strong Native Contingent and the Forest Rangers and, under General Chute **1**, marched from Whanganui toward Patea. After several days of 'cat and mouse' activities with the Hauhau forces the British group attacked and took the almost impregnable Te Putahi pa on the 7<sup>th</sup> January. After this attack Private Michael Coffey of the 14<sup>th</sup> hauled down the Hauhau flag which he presented to his colonel. This force continued in action for another month and, before it was disbanded. Was heavily involved in defeating and destroying several Hauhau Pa. Over the next four months the Regiment regrouped and gradually withdrew back to Auckland, departing from there on 10<sup>th</sup> June 1866 for Australia where they served in Tasmania, N.S.W, Victoria and Western Australia before returning to England in 1870.

**1** General Chute succeeded General Cameron as head of the British forces in New Zealand in August 1865.

Ian Barton



**Lt Col Charles Wilson Austen Died of wounds received at Rangiriri**

**F r i e n d s o f Q u e e n ' s R e d o u b t**

Early in 2013 the Trust resolved to formally set up a group to be known as the "Friends of Queen's Redoubt". A membership database has been set up and anyone with an interest in the work of the Trust is invited to join.

Current membership fees are \$25 for individuals, \$35 for families, \$40 for Historical organizations and \$60 for Commercial organizations; all inclusive of GST.

Please post a completed application form with a cheque or deposit the amount in our bank account:- **12 3022 0397102** + Your Surname

**I Barton, 40 Isabella Drive, Pukekohe 2120**

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM**

Given Name:

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Email address:

<b>Membership Category: (new rates)</b>		Historic	Commercial
Individual \$25	Family \$35	Organization \$40	Organization \$40
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**COMING EVENT**

The Official opening of the Visitor Centre will be delayed until at least some of the displays are in place. This is now expected to be sometime during 2017.

**LT COL CHARLES WILSON AUSTEN**

Lt Col C W Austen of the 14<sup>th</sup> Regiment was the most senior British officer killed in the New Zealand Land Wars. He was gazetted Lt Col in 1858, several years before Henry Booth and Jason Hassard, the other two officers of this rank who died in those wars. Until his time in New Zealand Austen had spent his career in the 83<sup>rd</sup> regiment and had retired on half pay, but was transferred to the 14<sup>th</sup> Regiment to succeed Lt Col Sir James Alexander who returned to England for family reasons in June 1862.

Charles Wilson Austen was baptised on 20 September 1818 at Chevening in Kent, a rural village near the south edge of London. His Father was The Rev John Austen, his Mother Harriett Lane and he had two brothers and four sisters. This was a typical gentry family of the period. The eldest son, John Francis succeeded to the property, the second son, Charles Wilson joined the army and the youngest, Henry Morland, became a clergyman.

C W Austen purchased an Ensign's commission in the 83<sup>rd</sup> (County of Dublin) Regiment of Foot at the end of 1838 and progressed normally through the officer ranks, attaining his Colonelcy in October 1858. He was in India during the Indian Mutiny serving in the affrays at Sanganeer, Kotaria and Sekur.

When he arrived in New Zealand, the Regiment was engaged in the construction of the Great South Road; being located at several camps along its length. By mid 1863 the 14<sup>th</sup> was at Queen's Redoubt and comprised a

third of the force which crossed the Mangatawhiri on July 12<sup>th</sup> to begin the invasion of the Waikato. He was in Queen's Redoubt hospital after being wounded at Koheroa and, while in hospital, wrote a letter of thanks to the Governor.

*Dear Sir George Grey, I send a few lines to thank you for your kind message to me by telegraph some days ago. I have got rather a sharp wound through the fore-arm but without touching the bone so I hope it will not be a long affair, and that I shall ere long be again in the field. The 14th I think did very well, Especially the young soldiers for the first time in Action. The firing from the enemy was very heavy from the first Rifle pits, and it is a wonder that we had so few casualties.*

*Sincerely C.W. Austen*

He led his regiment at Rangiriri and, while directing the fire of his men, was severely wounded in the thigh –the ball remaining lodged. Evacuated to the Pioneer he was taken back to the hospital at Queen's Redoubt where, although he was reported to be recovering well, succumbed to lockjaw 3 weeks later. **1**

There is not a great deal of information available about C W Austen but we can place him in the context of his time because of his relationship to the famous author.

Although Jane Austen died before he was born, C W Austen's Father would almost certainly have known Jane. (Fig 1)

Full details of Lt Col Austen's funeral were published in the newspapers of the time and, as usual for officers, it was a grand affair. His body was taken on a gun carriage from Albert Barracks to Symonds Street cemetery, accompanied by his chief mourners –all officers of the 14<sup>th</sup> Regiment. Other officers acted as pall bearers and there was also a 120 man firing party, the band of the 14<sup>th</sup>, Officers and NCO's from all regiments then in Auckland and numerous dignitaries of Auckland, including Governor Grey. Lt Col Austen's "charger" followed the coffin covered with a black pall and with his boots and spurs reversed. As is often the case with these earlier newspaper reports, a few myths were created. The Herald of 9 December 1863 reported that he had been scheduled to have left New Zealand, having inherited "a goodly fortune" as the result of the death of his brother. Not true since both his brothers (John and Henry) outlived Charles by several decades. He was also supposed to have been a school fellow of Sir George Grey at Sandhurst Military College. But while Grey entered Sandhurst aged 14, in 1826, there is no record of Charles Austen ever having attended there; and, because he was 6 years younger than Grey, it is unlikely they would have been there at the same time.

Ian Barton

**1** This was almost certainly tetanus, contracted by his wound becoming infected. The cause of tetanus was not determined until 1884 and a vaccine was not available until 1924. (Wikipedia)

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**PURPOSE OF THE TRUST**

The Queen's Redoubt Trust was established in February 1999 with the intention of acquiring this nationally significant historic place and ensuring its protection; with the long term vision to restore and develop the site into a nationally recognised visitor attraction and education centre. In February 2001 the Trust completed the first major phase of the project, raising the funds to acquire the property in Pokeno which contains much of the site of the Queen's Redoubt.

**OBJECTIVES of the TRUST**

1. To acquire the Queen's Redoubt site at Pokeno to preserve it for future generations.
2. To make Queen's Redoubt accessible to the public by development and interpretation of the site as appropriate.
3. To restore the massive earthwork 'ditch and bank' walls of the fort (they were leveled after the war) as a key interpretive feature.
4. To promote education about the Queen's Redoubt and all the New Zealand Wars between Maori and European.
5. To establish a premier visitor and educational facility on the Queen's Redoubt site. This will be carried out in conjunction with an archaeological excavation programme to maximize knowledge of the site for future exhibition and interpretation purposes, and to promote public participation in the project. At the same time, historical research will continue into Queen's Redoubt itself, the Pokeno District, the Waikato Campaign of 1863-64 and the New Zealand Wars as a whole.

## TARANAKI AND THE WAITARA LAND GRAB - THE FINAL TRIGGER OF THE NEW ZEALAND LAND WARS

It is now understood by most people that current friction between Maori and Pakeha in New Zealand has its roots in the Land Wars of the 19th Century. The little we are taught of this history in our schools is heavily biased toward the version promulgated by our colonial forbears; so it is interesting and challenging to read the viewpoint of the Benedictine monk, Dom Felice Vaggioli who served his church in New Zealand between 1879 and 1887. His book, in Italian, was published in 1896 but it was not until 2000 that it was translated into English by John Crockett. That it took over 100 years for this to happen was thought by some to be due to its strong pro-Maori stance. In fact it was so provocative that in the early 1900's the British Government apparently requested the Italian Government to suppress the work and, although most copies seem to have been destroyed, a few fortunately survived.

Vaggioli held the settlers and the Colonial Government to be responsible for the fighting and devastation of the Land Wars stating, "they had no intention of observing the Treaty of Waitangi and violated native rights."

The problems began when Maori began to resist demands that they sell land to the settlers. The first indication of trouble occurred in Taranaki, where, although the Government apparently already owned 25 000 acres of unsold land, they did not have the fertile Waitara Block, which in the late 1850's was farmed by its tribal owners. A purchase of 1200 acres of this land was made by the government's land buying agent, Donald MacLean, from Te Teira who did not have the right to sell. So in 1859 Governor Browne went to Taranaki to try and persuade the paramount chief, Wirimu Kingi Te Rangitake to sell Waitara but the approach was refused with MacLean later being told, "This is our decision, we will never part with the Waitara."

The Government tried various ways to change the mind of Te

Rangitake including, stating publicly, that he did not actually own the land. Despite the lies being spread the Maori remained resolute. They were not alone in their stand; the M.P for Newton, Mr Swainson stating in Parliament that the government's claim "was a blatant attempt to rob Rangitake of his land and the worst injustice ever perpetrated." Many other non-Maori also supported this view, including Bishop Selwyn, Sir William Martin (who until 1857 had been Chief Justice), Bishop Pompallier and other members of New Zealand's fledgling intelligentsia.

That Te Rangitake was in the right was also borne out by Governor Grey recognizing his rights by returning land in 1863, acknowledging that it had been wrongly purchased.

When the Maori owners passively resisted the survey of the land Governor Browne told Rangitake that he had 24 hours to seek pardon for his iwi's provocative behavior. The Chief replied that he had no desire for war but would not allow his land to be surveyed because he did not want it sold. Two days later Martial law was proclaimed, with troops and supplies pouring into the district "to punish the rebels." In early March 1860 the conflict between Europeans and Maori began.

This is a very brief summary of a much more complex issue but serves to show that what we have been taught as the history of the early years of European settlement requires much greater scrutiny if we are to resolve the injustices of the past. Dom Felice Vaggioli's book should be read more widely.

Ian Barton

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