



DESPATCHES

Newsletter of the Queen's Redoubt Trust

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Visiting the Museums and archives of British Regiments who were in New Zealand between 1860 and 1880

In issue 13 of the newsletter I explained that a visit to various repositories in the U.K was planned and this took place in April –May this year. In all I visited eleven places, including the National Archives at Kew. A great deal of new information was located which, when sorted, will be placed in the library to be established at Queen's Redoubt in our new building.

I was made very welcome wherever I went and the curators and archivists spoken to all proved very helpful. While no earth-shattering new discoveries were made, in fact some of the regimental archives contained very little information about their

time in Zealand, there were some interesting finds. During the time at Kew, on my last day in England, I found some files of maps at the National Archives. The index description given of these had led me to believe that they were maps we already had in this country. On the contrary they contained many original maps and plans drawn by various officers, which were quite new to me (see example p 2). A lot were about the war in Taranaki but there were some of the Waikato. It seems probable that maps and plans held at Kew are a source of information previously neglected by New Zealand historians. But as I am unlikely to be returning to the northern hemisphere, someone else will have to

investigate these. Another discovery was that, while the Naval Archives at Portsmouth do not have much original information, the National Archives at Kew contain several of the journals kept by Doctors or Surgeons aboard ships like the HMS Miranda. Not only do these contain full details of medical activities, they also have a great deal of pertinent comment on the people, climate and activities of the time.

Ian Barton

Queen's Redoubt website upgraded www.queensredoubt.co.nz

Have you looked at our website recently? If not then perhaps you should. Over the past few months it has been updated, new material added and from now on this will be done every 6 months or so. New sections added include newsletters which will be posted 6 months after publication and a section on the activities of the Friends of Queen's Redoubt. Old sections which have been updated include the draft time table and some photographs have been added.

The Battle of Rangiriri 20 November 1863

It had been intended that this issue of the newsletter would contain an analysis of the battle, particularly the reasoning behind the order given by General Cameron which led to the mortal wounding of Captain Mercer and several of his artillery men. The task has proven vastly more difficult than I had expected and, because there are still several original N. Z. and U.K. sources yet to check, this analysis will have to wait for a future issue. The problem is that there are several first

hand reports and plans of the battle and the pa site, as well as many accounts written later. When these are broken down chronologically and compared, inconsistencies begin to appear. An example is the fact that there are two lakes; Kopuera (Kopuwera) -small and quite near Rangiriri- and the larger Waikare. The shorelines of the lakes in 1863 were swampy and probably somewhat different to how they are now. Those present at the battle in 1863, including QM General Gamble who was usually very accurate, often confused the two lakes. In 1863 Kopuera may even have been part of Waikare since it is sometimes referred to as a lagoon. One result of this confusion are widely differing estimates of the length of the Maori fortifications –between 500 and 1300 yards. However it appears that both Cowan and Belich overestimated the length (1000 to 1300 yards), assuming the trench ran from the River to Lake Waikare, when in fact it ran to Lake (or lagoon) Kopuera –some 500 yards.

There is also confusion about where various units were during the attack. Most have the 65th regiment attacking on the west side, close to the Waikato river, but Charles Heaphy's map shows them attacking the eastern side. There seems little doubt that Captain Mercer led his men across the west parapet, previously taken by the 65th, and attacked from the south; but several writers state or imply

The Battle of Rangiririi (cont)

that the attack was made from the north side.

One of the main puzzles is why General Cameron sent a small number of Artillery men, led by Captain Mercer, to attack the very

strong central redoubt of the Pa. Mercer's family felt strongly that he had been sacrificed for no apparent reason and some detail of this was given in issue 14 of this newsletter. I am still coming to some conclusions about this and more research is needed.

BELOW:

A sketch map of the area around Queen's Redoubt - drawn by Lt Col Gamble.

National Archives Kew (MFO 1/1038)



Friends of Queen's Redoubt

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 is being set up and anyone with an interest in the work of the Trust is invited to join.

Current membership fees are \$20 for individuals and \$30 for families. We are currently reviewing membership grades for organizations and when these are known it will be announced in the newsletter. At present it is suggested that any organizations that wish to join, register at the same rate (\$30) as Family members.

Please post a completed application form with a cheque for the appropriate amount to:

I Barton, 40 Isabella Drive, Pukekohe 2120

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Given Name:

Surname:

Address:

Telephone:

Email address:

Membership Category:

Individual \$20	Family \$30	Organization \$30
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

COMING EVENT

Last year Queen's Redoubt had a stand at the Military Heritage Day at the Auckland Museum. We have been asked to take part again this year and, while no decision has yet been made, will probably be there. The date is Sunday 12 October and coincides with the WW1 Passchendaele commemorations at the Museum.

The new Information Centre at Queen's Redoubt

The past six months have proven very difficult. Just before the consent was granted, the local iwi –Ngati Tamaoho– lodged an objection with the Waikato District Council. The Trust elected to negotiate with Ngati Tamaoho and have spent six months on this. Just as I arrived back from the U.K, Neville's efforts paid off and we now have iwi agreement to proceed, subject to some minor changes to the building. Meanwhile the twelve months period allowed by the ASB Trust to uplift their grant expired. Thankfully they have agreed to an extension until 30 September. Currently the plans are being amended and re-submitted to the W.D.C; it is hoped that building will commence in July.

SOME FINDS FROM THE U.K. VISIT

MEDICAL RECORDS

One of the important finds was the depth of reports written by army and navy surgeons in New Zealand. Apart from the very full annual army health reports, held at the medical archives, there was a 38 page paper by the Sanitary Officer to the Troops, W A Mckinnon, which contains a great deal of information about all aspects of the British Army's time in New Zealand between 1863 and 1865. This has been copied and will be available in the library to be established in the new information centre.

Mackinnon's description of Queen's Redoubt was that it was "100 yards square with a caponiere at each of the opposite angles, for the defence of the ditch and a Commissariat store, hospital and huts for the accommodation of the troops Wounded from Rangiriri were transported by the 'Pioneer' to Queen's Redoubt hospital, which had been previously been

established by Dr Mouat, Principal Medical Officer, for 100 men, in anticipation of an engagement with the enemy. "

Mackinnon goes on to describe in some detail the progress of the invasion and the strength and disposition of the British forces, but also has quite detailed notes on the climate and topography (especially Auckland and Taranaki); the clothing, diet and ration supplies for the troops; duties of the troops, and prevailing diseases amongst them; the hospitals and the duties of sanitary officers in the field. Very full statistics are supplied on casualties between 1863 and 1866 and climate records for various centres in 1864.

While the Naval Archives at Portsmouth did not hold a great deal of relevant information, the British National Archives at Kew, did. It was here that I found the journal of surgeon Henry Slade of HMS Miranda, covering the period January to

ENEMA SYRINGE -1870

An interesting exhibit in the Medical Museum at Aldershot



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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 maximise 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.

U K Finds (cont)

December 1862. Over 50 pages long it contains detailed notes on the treatment of sailors for a variety of maladies, including several pages of statistics for the year. There is also a detailed diary of the movements and activities of the ship. In January she was three weeks in the Manukau Harbour, sailing for Sydney in early February; remaining there for five weeks before returning to Auckland in mid March. In both cases the Auckland-Sydney trip took nine days. In early April the Miranda returned to Sydney, taking 12 days for this voyage. At the end of April they were ordered to Melbourne with the shorter trip (than to Auckland) taking 10 days. Melbourne was described as a wonderful place which was booming as the result of gold discoveries in Victoria some 12 years earlier. Slade also went into raptures over the hospital, describing the wards "as cheerful and well adapted for patients". They returned to Sydney in mid May, staying a month before sailing to Fiji on 16 June.

The Miranda visited several of the Fiji Islands between late June and the 21st August when they returned to Sydney. Surgeon Slade writes a fairly detailed description of the Fiji Islands, covering such topics as local politics, landscape, marine life, cannibalism, the people and their dress and that the people were very interested in surgery. He was also asked to wait upon King Thakombau and treat him for dysentery and had many requests for help from the European residents because there was no medical person resident in the Fiji Group at the time. One man came from an adjoining island to request a truss,

which was supplied to him from the ships medical store. He makes a few comments on kava, suggesting it was similar in its affect to beer.

After arriving back in Sydney they left almost immediately for Melbourne, where the Miranda stayed until 20 November, then leaving for the uninhabited Hummock Island in Bass Strait. Here Slade describes a small wallaby, about the size of a hare, which he felt would be ideal for the dining tables of England. The Miranda left Hummock Island on 2nd December, bound for Auckland, the voyage taking 15 days.

During 1862 the ship had been 263 days at anchor and only 102 days at sea -in contrast to 172 days the previous year. Miranda did not spend many days in New Zealand during 1862, (about 70) but, the detailed description given by Surgeon Slade gives a good insight into the naval activities of the time.

Medical Museum, Aldershot: Annual report of the Medical Dept, 1867 contains Mackinnon's report for 1863-65

National Archives, Kew File ADM 101/238 Medical Journals for HMS Harrier and HMS Miranda

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