



DESPATCHES

NEWSLETTER OF THE QUEEN'S REDOUBT TRUST

ISSN 2324-5271

SERIES ON BRITISH UNITS AT QUEEN'S REDOUBT

This issue of Despatches looks at the activities of the Royal Navy during the New Zealand Wars. While the Navy did not operate from Queen's Redoubt they were an integral part of operations based on the Naval Camp, located on the banks of the Mangatawhiri Stream, a few Km south of the redoubt. The Navy had considerable presence in New Zealand from 1845 until January 1866. The Naval Brigade, comprised of men from several ships, took part in sever-

ROYAL NAVY IN NEW ZEALAND

A major problem for the British Navy, in the years before steam became the dominant method of propulsion, was the distance from Great Britain to Australia, New Zealand and the western Pacific. To take account of this an Australian Division of the East Indies Station was established in 1848 and in 1859 the British Admiralty established an independent command, the Australia Station, under the command of a Commodore who was Commander-in-Chief, Australia Station. Warships were assigned to this station, usually for several years. From the beginning of the New Zealand Wars until 1870, 24 ships were assigned to the Australia Station, many of which worked in NZ waters. These were relatively small ships - brigs, sloops, frigates and corvettes ranging from the 319 ton sailing brig Pandora, which surveyed much of the NZ coastline to the 2135 stream corvette HMS Pelorus, flagship of the Australia Station, which took part in several operations in Taranaki in 1861-62.

This article will examine the activities of the ships which served in NZ waters; the emphasis being on those which played a role in the conflicts of the 1860's.

H.M.S Brisk: Corvette, 1087 tons, screw and sail, 190 officers and men, 16 guns. Served in NZ waters in 1865, mainly on the East Coast and Bay of Plenty. She arrived in Auckland on 5 February, with the *Miranda* departing the same day. The

Brisk mainly undertook escort duties during the New Zealand land wars and her first task was to take 300-400 troops of the 14th Regiment, under Colonel W. C. Trevor from Manukau to Whanganui on 1 March 1865. On 15 May news was received the demise of the clipper *Fiery Star*. *Brisk* sailed for the Chatham Islands to search for the missing passengers and crew but none were found and she returned to Auckland. On 6 August she took 300 soldiers of the 70th Regiment from Taranaki to Napier and from there was involved in the fighting around Opotiki. In early 1866 she took soldiers of the 43rd Regiment to Taranaki. Then leaving Auckland for the south sea islands, she returned in January 1867 to take Governor Grey on a tour around the South Island before returning to Sydney.

H.M.S Cordelia: Sloop, 579 tons, screw and sail, 11 guns. Served in the first Taranaki War of 1860. Was involved in running a shuttle service from the Manukau and Wellington harbours transferring men from the Pelorus, Iris and Victoria to Taranaki.

H.M.S Curacoa: Frigate, 1571 tons, screw and sail, >201 officers, men and marines, 23 guns. Her men served in the Naval Brigade and in the Waikato River fleet. In 1864 some of their men were involved in the erection of the first building, a two storied wooden barracks at the Sandspit (Devonport Naval Base) Serving on the Curacoa was Lieutenant Klintberg, of the Swedish Navy, who had been with the "Curacoa's" men since they first landed at Gate Pā. He was reported as behaving

HMS Miranda at Pukorokoro. Water colour by Edward Arthur Williams

Hocken Library



The A.G.M of the Trust is to be held at the Visitor Centre at the redoubt at 6 pm on Wednesday 21 August 2019. ALL WELCOME

with much gallantry. Why a Swedish officer was serving in the British Navy is unknown but they may have had an exchange system operating.

H.M.S Eclipse: Barque rigged sloop, 750 tons, screw and sail, 4 guns, 190 officers, men and marines. She was based at Port Waikato for 5 months in early 1864 and was the only British warship to cross the bar and enter the Waikato River. She towed the gunboat Pioneer from Sydney to the Manukau, and then to Port Waikato, arriving on 3 October 1863. Her Captain, Commander R C Mayne was wounded at Rangiriri.

H.M.S Elk: Was in NZ for short period during first Taranaki War.

H.M.S Esk: Corvette, 1169 tons, screw and sail, >134 officers, men and marines, 21 guns. Esk was prominent in the Thames expedition and Esk Redoubt was named for her. Her Captain, J C F Hamilton (after whom the city of Hamilton is named) and five other officers and men were killed in action in NZ –most at Gate Pa; several others were wounded.

H.M.S Falcon: Sloop, 748 tons, screw and sail, 17 guns. Arrived in New Zealand in late 1863. Mainly stationed in Auckland but shelled Maketu in the Bay of Plenty in April 1864 and some of her men fought in the Naval Brigade at Gate Pa

H.M.S Fawn: Sloop, 747 tons, screw and sail, 17 guns. She served on the Australia station from late 1859 until late 1863. It was reported that in her three and a half years in New Zealand she lost 105 men to desertion, including two officers and that the Auckland police were "utterly inefficient" in apprehending them.

H.M.S Harrier: Sloop, 747 tons, screw and sail, 17 guns. Arriving Manukau Harbour on 4 June 1861 she was mostly in New Zealand waters 1861 – 1864, mainly stationed in the Manukau Harbour. For most of 1862 was used to transport Governor, Sir George Grey around the N Z coast. Towed the Avon from Christchurch to Manukau in November 1862. Men from Harrier served in the Waikato River fleet, and officers and men of the Harrier served in the Naval Brigade at Rangiriri, Gate Pa (where Commander Hay was killed) and Te Ranga. Was involved in rescuing survivors from the HMS Orpheus in February 1863. The Harrier returned to England on 10 December 1864 via the Falkland Islands, reaching Spithead on 17 March 1865.

H.M.S Himalaya: Iron built, screw and sail, 4690 tons. Main function was as a troop ship and she made several trips to New Zealand in this capacity. Her Captain, E Lacy was with General Cameron at Rangiriri and, because if this, was the only member of the crew to be awarded the New Zealand medal.(Stowers)

H.M.S Iris: Frigate, sail only, 906 tons, 28 guns, 240 officers, men and marines. 72 of her officers, men and marines served with the Naval Brigade in the first Taranaki War 1860-61. Her Captain, Commodore Loring, was at the time senior officer of the Naval squadron in New Zealand. Ordered back to England, possibly due to the fact that he was involved in a 'tout honneur' with Mrs Gore Brown who was 30 years his junior. According to Midshipman Gambier the Iris was known as a "Flogging Ship", under Captain Loring. But when Loring was recalled and Charles E.H. Vernon appointed Captain, Gambier remarked that "for the rest of the commission the "cat-of-nine-tails" slept undisturbed".

H.M.S Miranda: Corvette, screw and sail, 1039 tons, 15 guns. At least 98 of her officers, men and marines were with the Naval Brigade at Rangiriri, Miranda (Pukorokoro) the redoubt being named for her, Rangiaowhia and Gate Pa. Her Captain, Robert Jenkins was Senior Naval officer, New Zealand after the death of Commodore Burnett in the Orpheus wreck.

H.M.S Niger: Barque rigged corvette, screw and sail, 1013 tons, 15 guns. Captained by Peter Cracroft she served in First Taranaki War and on 1 March 1860 landed a 12-pounder gun and 50 men on a hill to the east of the town which became known as Fort Niger. On the 17th March some of her men were involved in the attack on Wiremu Kingi's pa at Waitara. On 28 March men from the Niger stormed the Kaipopo Pā. Here Leading Seaman William Odgers received the first Victoria Cross of the New Zealand wars. She left New Zealand in late 1860.

H.M.S Orpheus: Corvette, screw and sail, 1760 tons, 259 officers, men and marines. She was a relatively new ship, being commissioned in October 1861 and was described as "the largest and best equipped man of war that had ever come into the south seas." While en-route to Manukau with stores for the British forces in NZ, the Orpheus was wrecked on the Manukau bar with the loss of 189 lives. This is still the worst NZ Maritime disaster. Many of the sailors were rescued by the steamship Wongawonga. Four young Maori, the crew of the pilot boat at Manukau Heads -Kuki, Nehana, Roma and Timiona were also active in saving lives, being awarded the Royal Humane Society's Bronze medal for their part in the Orpheus rescue. A grant of £20 was also made to three of them; why not to the fourth is unknown!

H.M.S Pandora: Brig, 319 tons, sail only, 3 guns. Captained by Commander Byron Drury, she spent four and a half years between 1850 and 1856, surveying the New Zealand coast. The first chart of the mouth of the Waikato River was completed during this time.

H.M.S Pelorus: Corvette, steam and sail, 2135 tons, 16 guns and two torpedo tubes, 224 officers and men. Men from the Pelorus served in the Naval brigade in first Taranaki war. On 25 May Captain Seymour of the Pelorus landed to take command of the Naval Brigade in Taranaki. He was later wounded at Puketataurea

HMCS Victoria: Sloop, steam and sail, 580 tons, 21 guns, 58 officers and men. Originally built for the Colony of Victoria. Used as troopship and the carrying of stores, despatches and the evacuation of civilians. Some of her men also served in the Naval Brigade.

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WILLIAM OGDERS V.C

William Odgers was born in Falmouth, Cornwall, in February 1834. He joined the Royal Navy as a Boy 1C (first class) in August 1852 aboard HMS Vulture. When he was ranked Ordinary Seaman, on January 1st 1854, he signed on for 10 years Continuous Service Engagement (CSE).

His service record describes him as 5' 7" tall with a dark complexion, black hair and grey eyes. He was serving in the HMS Niger during the First Taranaki War, and it was here on the 28th of March, 1860, that he won the first Victoria Cross of the New Zealand Wars, displayed conspicuous gallantry at the storming of the Kaipopo Pā at Waireka.

In the London Gazette of 3rd August 1860 it was announced that the Queen had conferred the Victoria Cross on Leading Seaman, William Odgers because:

"on the 28th of March, 1860, William Odgers displayed conspicuous gallantry at the Storming of a Pā during operations against Rebel Natives in New Zealand; having been the first to enter it under a heavy fire, and having assisted in hauling down the enemy's colours."

According to his service record he was promoted to Captain's Coxwain from 12th July 1860 and Quartermaster from 15th August.

It has been said that the Captain of the Niger, Peter Cracroft promised £10 to the first person into the Kaipopo Pā. While no such payment is recorded on Odger's service record, there is a note to the effect that a payment of £50 was made at that time.

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.

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William Odgers served on the Niger until September 1861; after which he returned to England to serve on HMS Cambridge, training naval ratings in the use of naval guns. His Victoria Cross was presented at a parade at Devonport in July 1862.

As seemed to be the common practice with sailors nearing the end of their CSE commitment, William was posted to the Coastguard service on 11 March 1863 where his expertise was once again used in the training of young naval recruits. During the course of his two years of service he served as Boatman at Fowey, St. Mawes and Portland. He completed his service for pension requirement in May 1865 and effectively retired, although the timing may have had something to do with the fact that his wife, Ann, died at the end of February and he had to care for their children.

This was not quite the end of his naval service, for in February 1867 he joined HMS Rodney for her trip to Kobe, Japan, the first foreign ship to enter that port in over 200 years. He was the Admiral's Coxswain for this flag waving exercise.

William Odgers died on 20 December 1872 at the age of 40.

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THE WAIKATO
A history of New Zealand's greatest river by Paul Moon

Brett Cross, the Owner of the Atuanui Press, has kindly presented the Queen's Redoubt Trust library with a copy of Dr Paul Moon's book "The



WILLIAM ODGERS V.C.

Waikato; A history of New Zealand's greatest river", which Atuanui Press published last year.

Commencing from its source on the eastern slopes of Mt Ruapehu, the Tongariro River flows into Lake Taupo, to emerge as the Waikato River from the northern edge of the Lake. The total length of the longest river in New Zealand, from its snowy beginnings to Port Waikato, is 425 km and it drains a total of 14,260 square km.

Dr Moon, being an historian, deals mainly with recent history so discusses little of the fascinating story of the river's early beginnings although, in a short chapter, he does deal with the cataclysmic eruption which caused the formation of lake Taupo 27,000 years ago (pg 74). According to an early writer, A H Blake, this was

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one of the greatest eruptions anywhere in the world during the past 7000 years.

The section of the book which has most relevance to the history of Queen's Redoubt is the lower portion of the river, from Rangiriri to the sea. Moon explains that in May 1857 the Ngati Tipā Chief Waata Kukutai, from Te Kahonga, convened a hui to discuss the election of a Maori King. Kukutai was a moderate and while opposed to the sale of Maori land was not prepared to challenge the British Crown. The Maori were essentially split into two groups; both opposed to land sales but only one group prepared to defy the Crown.

While Dr Moon's story of the Waikato River, told as its history from Tongariro to the river mouth, is an interesting and engaging account; its coverage of one of the most important parts of its history - the land wars of the 1860's tends to be somewhat cursory, when compared with the accounts of other historians, and errors have crept in. For example, he tells of an interview with Mr C H Cross, then aged 91, by a reporter with the Auckland Star. Cross claimed to have fought at Rangiriri as a member of the 3rd Waikato Regt.

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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.

There are two problems with this account. There was a William Henry Cross in the 3rd Waikato's, and a miss-naming is quite possible but, as far as can be ascertained, none of the Waikato Regiments were involved at Rangiriri. If Cross was there he must have been in one of the British Regiments and later transferred into the 3rd Waikato Regt.(pg 364 Moon) This is only one example of a minor inaccuracy which, when made by a respected historian, tends to get woven into the story and become 'truth'.

Another of these relates to Captain Mercer. Dr Moon states that Mercer "spent the night on the battlefield lying in unutterable agony." In fact he, along with other wounded men, had been rescued by the combined efforts of his 2 i/c Lt Pickard and Assistant Surgeon Temple; (Pickard) both of whom were awarded the VC "for crossing and re-crossing the Maori line of fire and attending to and rescuing the several wounded from this relatively exposed site on the south side of the central redoubt". By 10 pm Mercer and the other wounded were being tended to by surgeons aboard the Pioneer. Dr Moon also errs in stating that Captain Mercer's wife arrived at the camp the following morning. This would have been a physical impossibility. What actually happened is described in William Morgan's Journal, where he recorded that news about Rangiriri (fought late on Fri 20th), arrived in Drury early in the afternoon of Sat 21st so it probably reached Auckland later that afternoon. He further records that Mrs Mercer arrived in Drury late Sat night and left early on Sunday morning for Queen's Redoubt. Which means she probably arrived at the Redoubt about mid morning on Sunday -almost two days after the battle.

Dr Moon explains that Europeans came quite early to the mouth of the Waikato River. In November 1830 Charles Marshall arrived from Sydney, looking to establish a trading post. Moon tells how

Marshall quickly adapted to Maori society and, apart from trading activities, began manufacturing bricks. In 1839 the missionaries Ashwell and Maunsell arrived and soon purchased land near the Waikato Heads which was to form the basis of their mission station. In late March 1840 Maunsell arranged for 32 chiefs from the region to sign the Treaty of Waitangi at the Waikato Heads. Although Dr Moon does not say so, this was apparently the English version, the interpretation of which has caused problems in subsequent years.

Despite the attempts of Maunsell and other missionaries to protect the Maori from the avarice of the settler government and their questionable land purchase practices, the situation deteriorated from 1840 resulting in the formation of the King Movement, the election of a Maori King and the eventual outbreak of war.

Moon states that by 1900, Port Waikato had failed as a port, a settlement and, certainly near the settlement itself, farming was difficult. The fast encroaching sand dunes on the north side of the river and the build-up of sand in the river itself led the government to establish the Wauiku Forest on the north dunes. Unfortunately, the clearance of bush and increase in farming along the length of the river also meant that silt and sand continued to be deposited! A proposal in the 1920's, to re-instate the use of small steamers to carry goods up the river, was also abandoned when a Government report showed it not possible to dredge the river, especially through the islands and shoals between Port Waikato and Te Kahonga. Over this period also, the

sandbank extending north from the southern edge of the river, continued to grow making the crossing of the bar even more treacherous.

Dr Moon's history of the Waikato River is, despite my minor quibbles, a well written and long overdue account of the history, and geography, of this important region of New Zealand. It is to be hoped that more accounts of this type will be written in the future.

Ian Barton

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