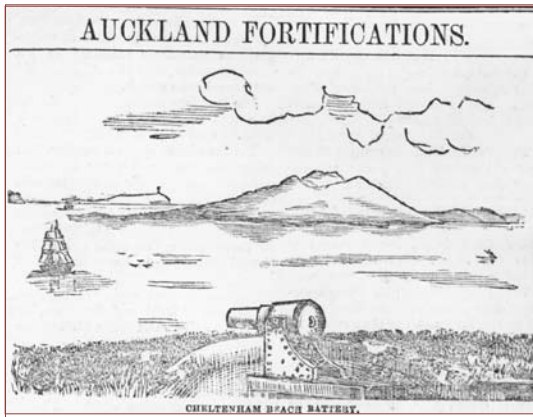


Introducing North Head

North Head is considered to be the most significant historical coastal defence site in the country. Its commanding views over the Hauraki Gulf and inner harbour have made it an important lookout and defence site for centuries, first for the early Maori inhabitants of the area, and later for European settlers.

First protected as a reserve in 1972 when it was included in the Hauraki Gulf Maritime Park, the North Head Historic Reserve is now managed by the Department of Conservation.

North Battery gun. Auckland Weekly News 25 April 1885



Please

- Keep dogs on a lead at all times and clear away dog litter.
- Do not light fires.
- Do not remove or disturb any artefacts or other historic remains. These are protected by law.
- Do not camp in the reserve.

Play safe!

Because of holes, sudden drops and uneven surfaces, especially in the tunnels, take care when exploring the reserve and supervise children at all times.

Self Guided Walk

North Head's Self Guided Walk introduces you to a complex of tunnels, guns, searchlight emplacements and other fortifications. These date from the late 1800s up to the time of the Second World War during which time North Head was a major military installation. The numbers on the map in this brochure correspond to numbered markers on the track. Approximate walking time is one hour.

North Head Historic Reserve
Open 6am-10pm daily

Getting there

Ferries run regularly between downtown Auckland and Devonport. Contact Fullers Ferries Devonport Ph 09-367 9118. A tour bus runs from the ferry to North Head and Mount Victoria seven days a week, meeting the ferries from 10am to 3pm.

For more information

DOC Auckland Area Office (North Head)
Ph 09-445 9142
DOC Auckland Information Centre
Ph 09-379 6476 Fax 09-379 3609
email: aucklandvc@doc.govt.nz
website: www.doc.govt.nz
Emergencies
FIRE: 111

DOC HOTline
0800 362 468
Report any safety hazards or conservation emergencies
For fire and search and rescue call 111

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New Zealand Government

North Head Historic Reserve

Hauraki Gulf Marine Park

Self-Guided Walk



Cover photo: 7 inch summit gun, 1885.
Mr C Watt



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



North Head in the 1870s before the building of the fort. *Auckland Institute and Museum*

Volcanic origins

North Head is one of the oldest of the approximately 50 cones in the Auckland volcanic field. It was formed over 50,000 years ago in a series of great volcanic explosions.

Coastal life

North Head is a superb example of New Zealand's rocky coastline. The coast is dominated by hard volcanic rock shelves, sheltered from the open ocean by Rangitoto Island. The rocky shore is made up of a number of different zones, each inhabited by different marine creatures adapted to life in their zone.

Pa site

Maori were the first to use North Head for defence purposes. It was one of three cone pa in the Devonport area. The only other remaining site is Takarunga (Mt Victoria.) Ngati Paoa settled North Head until they were attacked and besieged by Nga Puhi in the late 1700s. There are now few sites on North Head where evidence of Maori occupation can be seen.

Guiding ships into port

North Head's views over the entrance to Waitemata Harbour made it the natural choice for a pilot station for the newly established European settlement in Auckland. The station was set up in 1836.

Russian scare

Fears of a Russian invasion began to sweep New Zealand in the late 1800s. North Head became one of a number of defence forts that were rapidly set up to protect Auckland. The forts were supported by a torpedo boat based in Devonport, and a minefield that stretched across the harbour from North Head to Bastion Point. Searchlights were stationed at various points around the coast.

North Head had three forts - the North Battery (to defend Rangitoto Channel), the South Battery (to protect the inner harbour) and Fort Cautley (on the summit). Each fort had one or more heavy guns, an observation post and a high encircling earth walls with bullet-proof gates and barbed wire. The centrepiece of each was an 8 inch disappearing gun, the very latest in military technology in the 1880s.

The World Wars

During World War I the North Head military complex was ready for action, with soldiers living in barracks and tents on site. However, as with the Russian scare, the enemy never arrived, and the guns remained unused - except in practice. At the end of the war, many of the guns (including the disappearing guns) had been declared obsolete, and scrap merchants began to remove them.

By World War 2, Auckland's coastal defences had been extended to cover a much wider area. Some of North Head's guns were moved north to Whangaparaoa Peninsula. North Head became the Regimental Headquarters for the whole Hauraki Gulf defence system. Again, Auckland was not attacked, and the guns were used only for training and ceremony. North Head became a base for the Army's Compulsory Military Training Programme during the 1950s. Most heavy guns and equipment were either sold or scrapped - some of the guns in Albert Park and Newmarket are from North Head.

North Head Self Guided Walk

This self-guided walk introduces you to the military history of North Head - the tunnels, guns, searchlights and defences that were placed here to protect Auckland from attack. Much of the equipment was state of the art in its day, but some never became fully operational, and the guns never fired a shot in anger.

1. Start – North Battery

The tunnel entrances on your right lead into the North Battery (a battery is where guns are sited). North Head's first guns were placed here in 1870. This gun battery was one of three military forts on North Head. It was designed to defend Rangitoto Channel. *Follow the green banded posts up the hill.*

2. 4-Inch Battery Observation Point

This is an observation post that was part of the North Battery. The mural painted along the top of the windows shows the degree of bearing for the guns. *Carry on up the steps.*

3. 6-Inch Battery Mk VII Battery

This gun battery has spent a lot of time on the move! Its construction started in 1904 at the summit. Then a senior officer decided that it should be on this site, so it was completed here in 1910. When Lord Kitchener visited New Zealand on a tour of inspection in 1911, he commented that the battery should have been on the summit! The two 6-inch, MK VII guns that were sited here, were moved to Whangaparaoa in 1940, and moved back again in 1946. They remained in use for practice purposes until 1960, when they were scrapped. *Walk up to the summit.*

4. Barracks

From here you can see the two oldest buildings on North Head. The long, grey wooden building was erected in 1885 by the Armed Constabulary, the forerunners of the New Zealand Army. It was used first as a barracks and then until 1914 as a prison for up to 40 prisoners who provided the labour to build the fortifications. The stone building was the kitchen, built in 1885 (see over).

Follow the colour-banded posts along the white coastal track, the yellow tunnel track and the green summit track (see attached map) to locate the dark green site-numbered posts marking the features described below.



6-inch Mk VII Battery, 1946. *W. Ruffell*

North Head Gunners 1900. Man on right is the Master Gunner. *W. Ruffell*



North Head Self Guided Walk (continued)

It was made of stone to limit the risk of fire. A short film on North Head's history is shown daily, on demand. Further down the slope are 4 more buildings. Three of these date from World War 2 and were either barrack accommodation or offices. The smallest building dates from 1910. Walk on the summit and behind the wooden barracks you can see the three entrances to the tunnels of the Summit Battery. Walk up the steps to the hill above.

5. 8-inch gunpit

It is easy to see from here why North Head was such a good location for a fort to defend the entrance to the harbour, with its clear views of both the Rangitoto and Motukorea Channels. The round gun pit in front of you once housed an 8 inch disappearing gun. Under the ground are the tunnels and magazines used to store the ammunition for this part of the fort. The concrete building at the highest point of the summit was built in 1937 and was the Fire Commander's Post. During the Second World War all the guns used to defend Auckland were controlled from this building. The other gun pit to the south was first built in 1885 and housed a 7 inch Rifled Muzzle Loader gun. Follow the road down the hill until you come to the big green gun. The little structure with the conical roof was the Observing Station from where the big gun was aimed.

6. 8-inch gun and Saluting Battery

The big gun dates from 1886 and is one of the few remaining 8 inch disappearing guns left in the world. It is called a disappearing gun because as it fired the force of the recoil pushed the gun back underground where it could be reloaded under cover. The energy from the recoil pushed the brown coloured metal shaft into the pressure vessel under the gun where it compressed

air and water. This pressure was then released to return the gun to the surface. The big gun fired a 100 kg shell about 6,000 metres. The row of smaller guns here was a saluting battery and fired a 21 gun salute to Queen Elizabeth II on her visit in 1953. It is part of a war memorial to gunners from both World Wars. Carry on down the slope where you will find a small entrance into South Battery.

7. South Battery

The entrance here takes you inside the volcano. You can see the layers of volcanic ash in the walls and ceiling. The caves here were dug by the prison labourers in the 1880s. At the beginning of the Second World War the 40 men who worked the searchlights lived here. Their commanding Officer was Major Ezra Badger and they were known as "Ali Badger and his 40 Thieves" and this place as "Ali's Cave". Walk up the tunnel toward the light until you reach the gun. Walk down the passage behind the gun until you get to a junction of four tunnels. Straight ahead are the stairs leading to the Observing Station, to your right are the magazines. The magazines are where the ammunition for the gun was stored. The magazines usually had two rooms, an inner one to store the cartridges (bags of gunpowder used to fire the gun), and an outer room used to store the shells. To work in the cartridge store the gunners had to wear special clothing and shoes with no metal fittings that might cause sparks and set off the ammunition. Around these rooms is a small tunnel called a lamp passage. This was used because there was no electricity here in the 1800s and all light came from candle lamps. These were placed in this passage and shone through the little windows which originally had glass in them to prevent the lamps and the ammunition coming in contact. Now walk down the dark tunnel on the left of the passage to the gun. It is dark but there is light at the end of the tunnel. The room on your right with the fireplace was where the gun crew rested.

Carry on down the tunnel to a T-junction. On your left is a tunnel to a gun pit which once housed a 64 pounder muzzle loading gun and on your right is the magazine for this gun. Take the right turn and go outside. To your right is the main magazine for the fort used until the 1950s to store reserve ammunition. Turn left and follow the steps down to the next level.

8. Engine Room

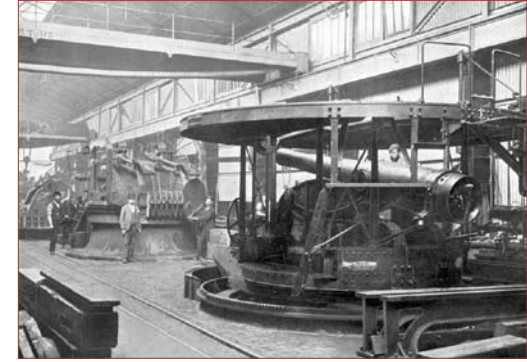
This is where the engines used to generate electricity for the searchlights were housed. Go through the large entrance ahead of you into the engine room. At the back you will see a small tunnel, which was built as an emergency escape tunnel. Follow this out and continue down the path in front of you.

9. Minefield Observation Post

Turn left at the sign for a short detour to the minefield observation post. Strings of mines were placed across the harbour from North Head to Bastion Point and were controlled and fired from this building. However the minefield never functioned properly, due to a shortage of trained staff, essential parts and boats (they only had one of the 11 needed to lay and maintain the field). The minefield was dismantled in 1908.

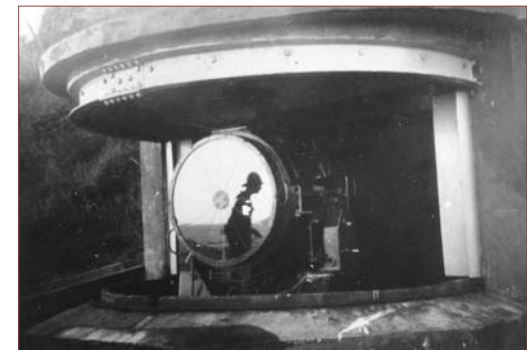
10. Searchlight Tunnels *

Continue on down the hill and follow the signs until you reach the steps down into the darkness. You will reach a tunnel junction with tramway rails in the floor. Stop, look up and you will see a high shaft cut from the rock. From 1890 until 1900 this was the only access to these tunnels via a ladder fixed to the wall. The steps and tunnel you have just walked down were added in 1900 so that soldiers would not have to climb down the iron ladder (dangerous on a wet winter's night). The rails in the floor were used to run a searchlight between



Disappearing gun being manufactured at Royal Carriage Factory, 1880s. Navy and Army Illustrated

21 Gun salute to HM Queen Elizabeth Royal Visit, 1953, RMS Gothic. NZ Herald



No. 2 Searchlight, 1937. W. Ruffell



North Head Historic Reserve

0 100m

Key

- ① Interpretation sites
- P Parking
- i Information
- ♿ Toilets
- ⚠ Vehicle gates locked at 8pm
- ⚠ Pedestrian gates locked at 10pm
- Coastal Loop
- Summit Loop
- Tunnels Loop

the different emplacements. Follow the tunnel out to the seaward entrance. At the bottom of the steps turn left and follow the coastal walkway past the concrete searchlight emplacement.



11. Boom Defence System

The wooden posts set into the coastal rock here are the remains of a boom defence designed to repel enemy submarines during World War 2.

12. Annie's Cave*

Annie's Cave is hidden behind this searchlight emplacement. The cave is thought to have been built by convicts, and may have serviced the minefields.

13. Perfume Point

This was once a main sewer outfall – hence its name! A sewer tunnel was dug under North Head from here to Torpedo Bay – no small feat in the days when pick and shovel were the only tools. The track you are walking on was built during the Second World War by searchlight crews.

14. Volcanic History

The cliffs here were formed by the multiple volcanic explosions that created North Head over 50,000 years ago. Each layer represents an individual eruption.

15. Coastal Interpretation

Look ahead along the track to the next rocky outcrop. At low tide you can see the different inter-tidal zones of North Head's rocky coast.

16. Searchlight Emplacements

This is one of a series of concrete shelters along the coast which housed searchlights, installed between the late 1800s and 1930s. The structure and tunnel here were built in 1915 to house a searchlight.

17. Anti-Torpedo Boat Defences

In 1942 several quick-firing guns were mounted here to repel torpedo boat attacks and to protect Cheltenham Beach.

18. Scrapped Guns

This area was used for drill practice in the 1880s. The intact gun is a 6-inch disappearing gun, originally mounted at Bastion Point, and the cut up gun is an 8-inch disappearing gun from North Head. During the Second World War soldiers and volunteers camped or lived in barracks on the flat terraces below.

North Head's boom defence system around 1940 (see stop 11). You can see the floating boom (barrier) with steel nets hanging beneath. It stretched from North Head to Bastion Point. Picture shows ship passing through gate.

*There are a number of myths surrounding the naming of this cave. One involves entertainment of the troops.

Stop 15 on the walk
Coastal zones
 Below low watermark is a fringe of brown seaweeds. Above this is a damp zone with pools of Neptune's necklace, red algae and grazing molluscs such as the limpet. A midshore zone is home for small barnacles. Above these is a zone of lichens.