

Historic Fort Takapuna O Peretu

Hauraki Gulf Marine Park



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



Aerial view of HMNZS TAMAKI circa 1988.
 Photo: RNZN Museum

Key:

1. Officer Training School (former Artillery Barracks)
2. Brigadiers House (removed 1999)
3. Original Fort Takapuna (obscured behind trees)
4. Officers Mess (showing Annex - now removed)
5. Battery Observation Post
6. 'Puna' (Harbour Defence Observation Post)
7. Gunnery School (demolished 2000)
8. Naval magazines
9. Left Battery
10. Ministry of Works Depot (demolished)
11. Site of Right battery (removed 1942)
12. Degaussing Control Hut (demolished)



HMS NEW ZEALAND at the Battle of Jutland 31 May 1916, from a painting by W. Wiley. RNZN Museum
 (The 4-inch guns emplaced at Fort Takapuna in 1938 came from this ship.)

O Peretu

(The dwelling place of Peretu)

O Peretu, is the ancient name of Takapuna Head/Fort Takapuna. A series of migrations, conquests, and occupations reflect the long Maori history of the area. Originally the land was settled by people of Tainui and Kawerau descent who then came under pressure from the Hauraki tribes. Today the tribal groupings of Ngati Whatua, Kawerau a Maki and Ngati Paoa all have ancestral association with this place. The settlements and villages of Peretu and his people extended from Maunga Uika (North Head) north along the coastline to just beyond Te Raparapa-a-Peretu (Castor Bay).

In spite of several generations of warfare extending from the 1760s to the 1820s the traditional occupants remained on the land until after European settlement began.

In 1841 a large tract stretching from North Head to Te Arai Point was purchased from the Hauraki tribes by the Crown. In 1853 J Hammond purchased 65 acres at Takapuna for £218. Subsequently he subdivided the land and in 1881 28 acres on Takapuna Head was purchased by an Auckland

businessman and entrepreneur - Robert Adam Mosely Stark, who built a two storey house on the property.

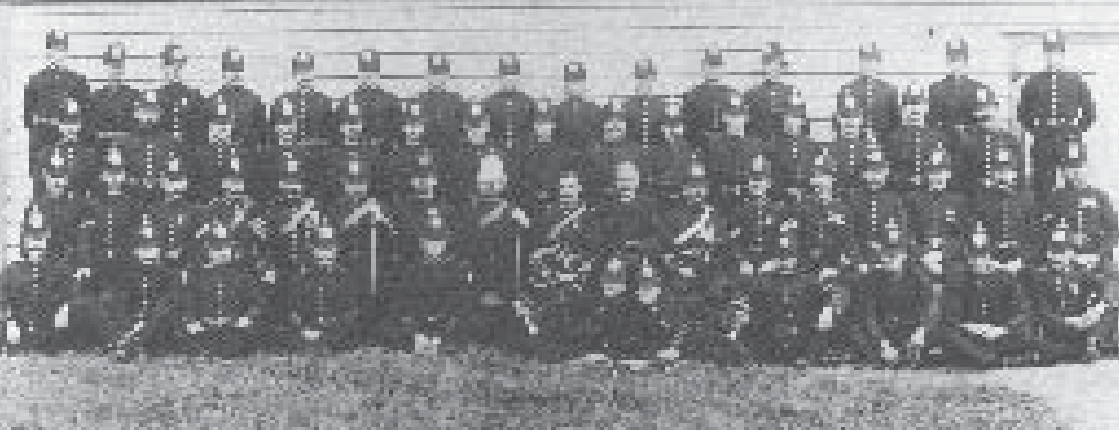
Colonial Defence

For thirty years after the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, New Zealand's defence forces focused on internal conflicts although the Colonial Government was concerned about the country's undefended coast. From the 1850s reports on the situation had been commissioned but the colony remained virtually undefended against external attack. In the 1870s several factors combined to bring the threat of such an attack to public attention.

In 1873 David Luckie, editor of the Auckland newspaper, the *Daily Southern Cross*, published a long article detailing the 'sudden appearance of the hostile iron-clad man-of-war, the *'Kaskowiski'*, which took possession of the British warship lying in the waters of the

Devonport 'Navals' (Naval Artillery Volunteers), 1899. RNZN Museum





Permanent Artillery from Forts Takapuna and Cautley, 1901.
North Shore Historic Society

Waitemata, seized our principal citizens as hostages, demanded a heavy ransom for the city, and emptied the coffers of the banks'.

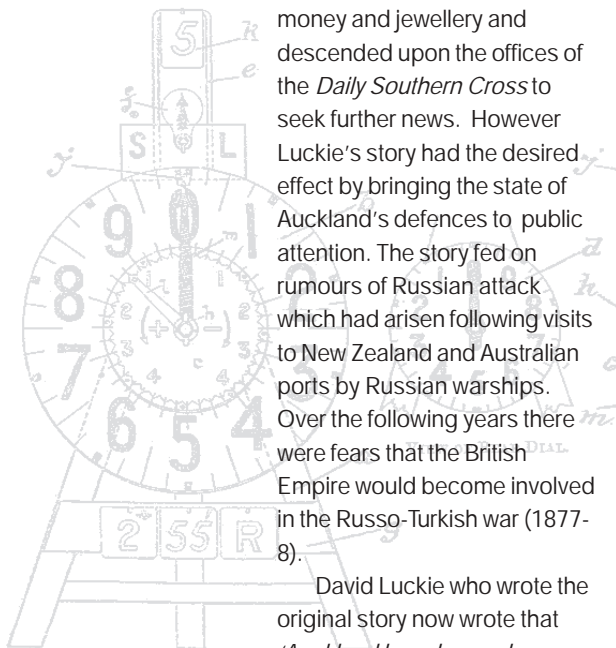
While it was a fabrication, the story of the 'Kaskowiski' (cask of whisky) was taken seriously by many readers. Panic stricken citizens hurriedly hid money and jewellery and descended upon the offices of the *Daily Southern Cross* to seek further news. However Luckie's story had the desired effect by bringing the state of Auckland's defences to public attention. The story fed on rumours of Russian attack which had arisen following visits to New Zealand and Australian ports by Russian warships. Over the following years there were fears that the British Empire would become involved in the Russo-Turkish war (1877-8).

David Luckie who wrote the original story now wrote that *'Auckland has shown she can be roused from apathetic slumber'.*

While Auckland already had two forts (Albert and Britomart) these were designed to defend the town from a land based attack from Maori.

At the time New Zealand's 'army' consisted of the Armed Constabulary supplemented by a number of volunteer units - Militia and Naval Artillery. Some had served in the Waikato campaigns of the 1860s.

By the 1870s the last British troops had left New Zealand, leaving only the constabulary and the volunteers. However, the decade following the Waikato campaigns had seen no action and volunteers declined in numbers. The part time nature of the force also hindered its effectiveness. In 1872 an observer noted that: *'the muster of the Naval Corps was meagre but there is much difficulty in assembling the members of these corps together at one time as so many are employed in the coasting trade'.* It was clear that if a foreign power wished to attack, it would probably succeed.



Range Indicator for transmitting range and deflection. *Manual of Coast Defence Range-Finding 1927*

Britain had provided troops for New Zealand's earlier internal conflicts and it was still to the mother country that the New Zealand Government looked to provide security. However the British Prime Minister, William Gladstone, wished to see the colonies become increasingly self-reliant. The Colonial Office in London recommended land based defences. These were approved in 1879. Following another Russian war scare the Colonial Government received a shipment of guns which cost £37,500, a large sum in those days. Funds for the erection of these in fortifications at the main ports were approved but this was rescinded by the Premier - George Grey. The guns were put into storage.

In 1883 Major Henry Cautley had been seconded to the New Zealand Government, at the request of the Governor of New Zealand, to prepare plans for fortifications at the main ports. Auckland was to have elaborate brick and masonry forts at several locations: on North and Takapuna Heads, Bastion and Resolution Points, Mt Victoria, and Cape Horn on the Manukau.

However in 1885, before work on these could begin, the alarm was raised again when Russia seized the town of Pendjeh in Afghanistan. Faced with renewed fears of a Russian

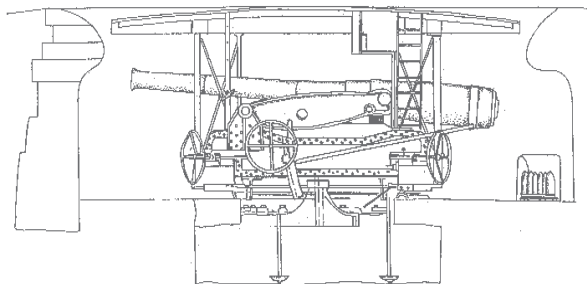
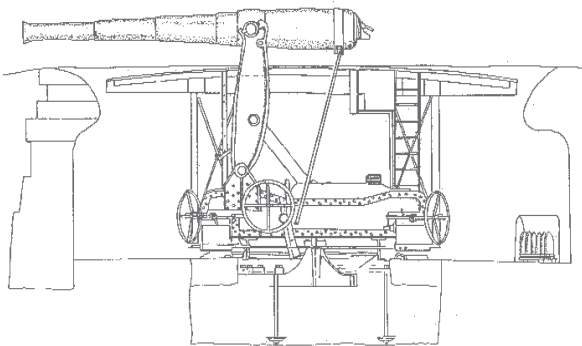
war, the Governor, William Jervois, stated that *'the most effective way the colonies could assist Great Britain if she were at war would be by putting all their ports in an efficient state of defence'*. These works would show the populace that the government had finally heeded the call to defend the colony.

The war scare meant that Cautley's elaborate plans could not be implemented, and guns were hurriedly emplaced in earth pits on North Head and Resolution Point. More guns were ordered, and later, in 1885, when Cautley returned to Britain, his replacement, Major Edmond Tudor Boddam, set about designing fortifications for the new guns.



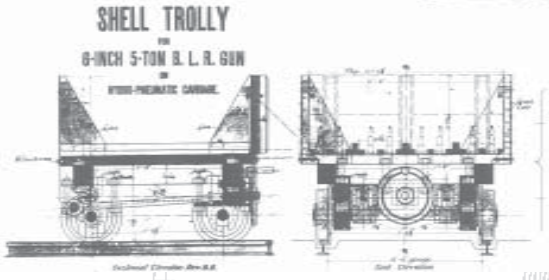
Nordenfeldt 6 - pounder quick firing gun
RNZN Museum

6-Inch disappearing gun in raised position (top) and loading position (bottom).
John Mitchell





Left: Drawing of trolley for transporting shells within the Fort. *Tudor Boddam*.



boarded a steamship bound for San Francisco - never to be heard of again.

Work on Fort Takapuna began in late 1885 under the supervision of the Public Works Department and to Tudor Boddam's design. The battery was built to mount two 6-inch breech loading 'disappearing' guns. (These guns were designed to recoil back into the pit after firing thus making it difficult for an enemy ship to spot them.) In 1889 a 6-pounder Nordenfelt Quick Firing gun was added on each flank. A dry moat surrounded the fort on all sides and a drawbridge provided entry into the fort. The barracks comprised two sleeping areas, a living room, kitchen and lavatory. A 30-foot brick lined well was sunk in the floor of the lamp room of the battery. Despite the desirability of concealing the fort from enemy shipping, a windmill was erected on the battery roof to power the well's pump. The fort was largely completed by 1889. It was manned by Permanent Force Gunners, assisted by the Naval Artillery Volunteers. In

Fort Takapuna

In 1885 the Government decided to take Stark's property under the Public Works Act for the new fort at Takapuna. He was forewarned of the government's plans by the Prime Minister, Julius Vogel, who met him while holidaying at the Waiwera thermal resort. Stark took advantage of the warning. Though the government valuation for the land was around £8,000, Stark claimed he had recently been offered £17,000 for it. The Government Land Valuer raised the valuation without question, accepting Stark's statement. When the price paid became public, there was an outcry to which the government responded by setting up a Royal Commission of Inquiry. Meanwhile Mr and Mrs Stark

Plan of Fort and Barracks.
Drawing: John Mitchell



Second Maori contingent prior to embarking for Europe.
Auckland Weekly News, September 30, 1915.



1893 Colonel Francis Fox carried out a review of coast defences. He was clearly not impressed with Fort Takapuna and recommended it be used only for training, and that the two smaller guns mounted there be transferred to other forts in Auckland.

Meanwhile the fort was connected by telephone to the nearby batteries on North Head, and the Fire Command Post on Mt Victoria. In 1898 searchlights were installed so that the guns could be fired at night. An engine room to house the steam driven generator was built at the eastern end of Takapuna Head. Early problems were caused by the smoke from the steam engine drifting in front of the guns and blocking the view. In 1916 the original 25 horse power 'Soho' steam engine was sent to North Head and replaced by two 25 horsepower kerosene engines.

World War 1

In 1913 Fort Takapuna was manned by four officers and 155 other ranks. As the barracks were too small to accommodate all of them, tents were pitched for the remainder. The battery was fully manned on the outbreak of the First World War but the garrison was soon



reduced to just four, with a reserve to come from North Head in an emergency.

Te Hokowhitu a Tu

In World War 1 the old Coast Defence fort was expanded so that it could be used for training Maori and Pacific Islanders including men from Rarotonga, Niue, the Cook Islands, Tahiti, Fiji and the Gilbert Islands. After some debate the Maori Contingent was organised by iwi affiliation. The first contingent sailed for Egypt in February 1915. By 1918 31 Maori Drafts had been sent to Europe with a total of 2,227 Maori, and 458 Pacific Island soldiers.

The Auckland Weekly News set the scene in July 1915:

'The second contingent of Maori for active service abroad is now comfortably established in a camp at Narrow Neck, within the reserve attached to Fort Takapuna, Auckland. A total of 353 officers and men

Niue Island recruits at Narrow Neck.
Auckland Weekly News,
October 28, 1915.



Maori soldiers at bayonet practice.
Auckland Weekly News,
September 28, 1915.

Maori and Pacific Island recruits swimming off Narrow Neck (Fort Takapuna).
Auckland Weekly News,
January 20, 1916





Drill on the beach.
Auckland Weekly News
July 22 1915

were assembled last week and the strength of the force will shortly be increased to 400 by the arrival of other volunteers.'

Living conditions during the first winter were basic. At first,

of Rarotongans already in camp, and a number of Maori, all of whom will constitute the third native contingent.'

Towards the end of the war men from the Waikato tribes, who resisted conscription, were interned at Narrow Neck.

During this period an artillery school was established and Fort Takapuna became the headquarters of Auckland's Field Artillery.



Right: Von Luckner (head behind newspaper) and other POWs at Narrow Neck, 1918.
Auckland Public Library Archives

the whole force was accommodated in tents which needed to be moved to drier land after heavy rain. In October the camp became more multi-cultural, when the same paper reported that:

'A party of 150 young men from the tropical island of Niue arrived at the native training camp at Narrow Neck last week. They had been fitted out with denim suits, forage caps, and military overcoats, and, being big, athletic men, created a very favourable impression . . . They will be trained with the two score

Prisoners of War

Fort Takapuna, now referred to as Narrow Neck Camp, was also used as an Internment Camp. The British Empire classified as 'enemy aliens' any subject of the Central Powers, namely Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey and Bulgaria. However, even subjects of neutral or Allied countries risked internment if signs of sympathy with the Central Powers came to the attention of the authorities. Most internees were detained at Somes Island, Wellington and

Count Felix Von Luckner
RNZN Museum



on Motuihe, an island in the Hauraki Gulf. However newly captured prisoners of war were housed at Narrow Neck for short periods, awaiting transfer to Wellington. Two deserve special mention.

One was the 'Sea Devil', German Navy Captain Count Felix Von Luckner, who became the subject of legend. He commanded the *SEEADLER*, a sailing vessel converted into an armed merchant cruiser which, in 1916, avoided the British blockade in the North Sea and headed for the South Atlantic. Before rounding Cape Horn *SEEADLER* captured 11 vessels and took nearly 300 prisoners, without loss of life on either side. After being wrecked on a reef at the Society Islands Von Luckner and five companions sailed a small boat 2000 miles to Fiji where they were captured. He ended up as a POW on Motuihe, an island in the Hauraki Gulf near Auckland. The Germans were not popular but their subsequent escape from the island and recapture stirred the public imagination. Unfortunately it ended the career of Lieutenant Colonel Turner, Officer in Charge of the camp who was Court Martialled and dismissed from the Army for letting his prisoners escape.

Another prisoner of war, Joseph Meshoullam, was New Zealand's sole Turkish POW. He



Crew of *SEEADLER*.
RNZN Museum

had signed on to the troopship *SS 'Orari'* when it called at Alexandria to drop off some troops fated for Gallipoli, but the crew became suspicious and he was detained and taken to Narrow Neck before being transferred to Somes Island.

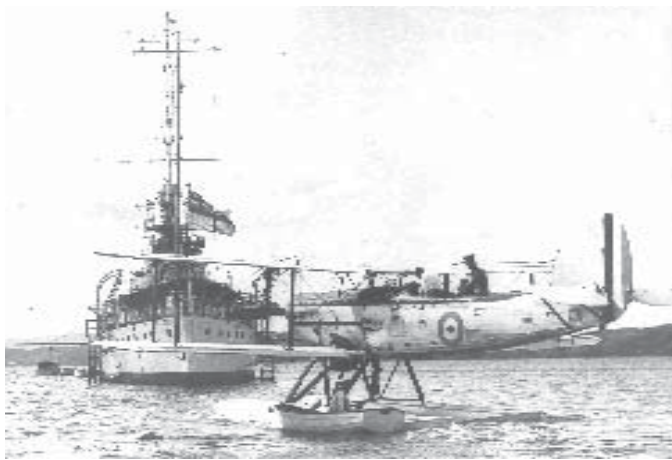
In December 1918 the Health Department required the use of Motuihe for quarantining returning soldiers. As a result the POWs, including Von Luckner were transferred to Narrow Neck.

HMS NEW ZEALAND

Prior to World War 1 the people of New Zealand had paid for the construction of a battlecruiser for the Admiralty's Grand Fleet. HMS NEW ZEALAND paid a visit to NZ in 1913 before taking part in the Battle of Jutland, the largest surface naval engagement of all time. After she was scrapped in the 1920s her secondary armament, comprising 14 4-inch guns was shipped to New

Top: Postcard 1913
Below: HMS NEW ZEALAND, 1915.
RNZN Museum





HMS DIOMEDE and Fairey III F aircraft.
RNZN Museum

Zealand. In 1924 a Major Sandle wrote *"Since the arrival of the 4-inch armament ex HMS NEW ZEALAND, in my opinion the installation of four of these guns at Fort Takapuna would make this work into a first class examination battery"*. (In 1899 Fort Takapuna had been designated an Examination Battery where *'incoming ships should heave-to for inspection'*.) Nothing was done at the time but in 1938 4 of these guns were emplaced at Fort Takapuna.

ammunition, which was being stored in disused coast defence batteries at Mt Victoria and North Head. In 1926 the ammunition was moved to Fort Takapuna, after the underground parts of the fort were converted to a munitions store. Roofs were built over the open galleries and gunpits and the storage area was further enlarged with the erection of a small building at the entrance to the underground fort (now called the fuze store or warhead and depth charge store) as well as four other magazines and administration buildings.

Top right: Rifle drill C Company First Infantry Battalion.
Bottom right: Machine Gun demonstration.
Von Schramm

Top: Naval Magazine.
Centre: Torpedo onboard HMS DIOMEDE.
Bottom: Gun drill, HMS DIOMEDE.
RNZN Museum



Between the Wars

After the 'war to end all wars', defence was not seen as a priority. The fort was abandoned but the searchlights and engine room were kept operational. However the old Fort was to take on a new role. The New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy included two 6-inch gun cruisers, HM Ships DIOMEDE and DUNEDIN. The naval base at Devonport did not have sufficient storage space for the ships' reserve





Top left: C Company Officers and NCOs.

Bottom left: C Company loading up, 1928.
Von Schramm



1942 concrete shelters called 'Colchester Gun Covers' were built to protect the gun crews. The guns were manned by the Takapuna Battery, part of the 9th Coastal Regiment. The guns were described as 'Ordnance Bag Loading 4-inch Mk VII Guns', meaning that these guns used 'separate' rather than 'fixed' ammunition, the explosive charge (propellant) being supplied in bags rather than in a brass case fixed to the shell.

British War Office policy dictated that 'First Class Defended Ports' such as Auckland should have minefields and underwater detection devices installed. Six indicator loops (coils of copper wire which, when an electric current was passed through them measured fluctuations in the magnetic field) were laid by an Australian Naval auxiliary *HMAS Mernoo* in the Motukorea and Rangitoto channels. Seven ASDIC (Sonar) 'pinging' arrays were also laid on the sea bed,

Top: 4-inch gun ex HMS NEW ZEALAND with temporary cover.

W Ruffel

Bottom: Guns with Colchester covers.

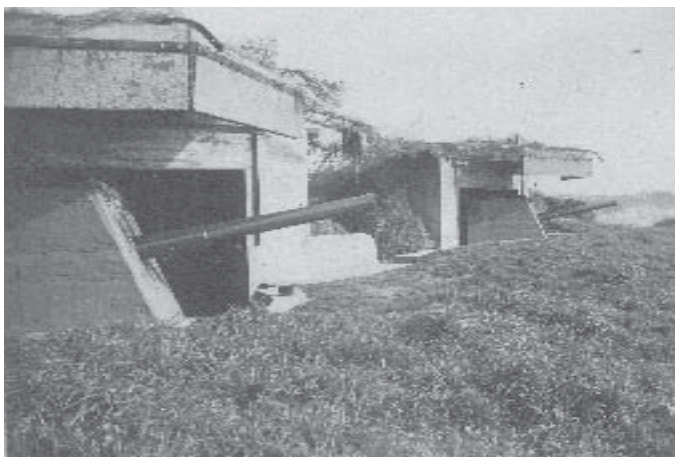
Pat Sherwood

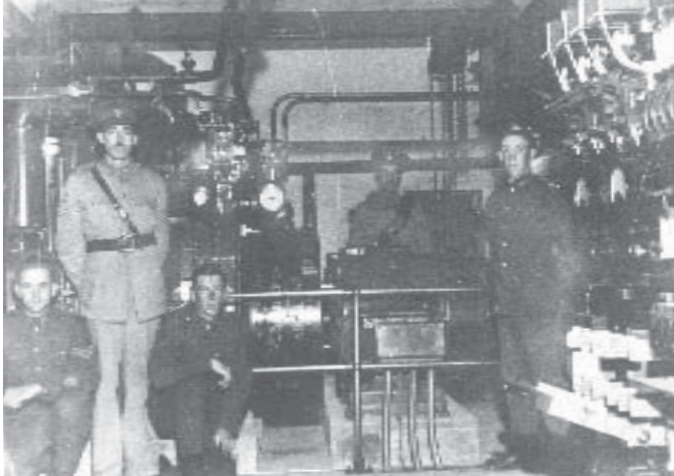


By 1934 the ammunition store was full and the Navy needed more space. At the same time the Army wanted to reactivate Fort Takapuna as an operational coast defence gun battery. The matter was resolved when the Navy decided to build a new armament depot at Kauri Point. The alterations made to the old fort meant that it could not easily revert to its former use so the new gun emplacements were sited to the south of it. A shortage of coastal guns meant that in 1938 the first four of the old HMS NEW ZEALAND guns were reactivated and installed at opposite ends of the rugby field and referred to as Left and Right batteries.

World War 2

In 1940 two more 4-inch guns were added to Left Battery, bringing it up to four. In





Engine Room 1938.
W/Ruffel

three of which were controlled by 'Puna', the Observation Post which replaced the original 'Takapuna Control Hut'. In addition a degaussing (DG) range was laid to enable ships' magnetic signatures to be measured. This was needed to calculate the settings for the electric coils that were pulsed to protect ships from magnetic mines. The DG range was controlled from a building which stood on the cliff top on the other side of the football field directly behind the now disused Right Battery. Finally a hydrophone (listening) array was laid from North Head to Bean Rock.

In addition the battery was fully manned, the searchlights were replaced and the generator overhauled. There was a major expansion of the District School of Artillery and Mobilisation Camp.

The Japanese entry into the war in December 1941 injected a new sense of urgency. The response was a strengthening

of port defences. These included pillboxes, anti tank ditches, road blocks, dug outs and gun pits. At Fort Takapuna Mobilisation Camp two pillboxes were built to cover the southern end of Narrow Neck Beach and one to cover the northern end of Cheltenham Beach. Further building work was carried out which saw a combined mess, administration buildings and the district gunner's store built. Over the course of the war the number of 4-inch guns mounted varied from six, to four, then three, and finally by late 1942, only the Left Battery remained, with two guns. This was the only coast defence battery in Auckland which remained operational for the entire duration of the war.

When war was declared in 1939 hundreds of young men were mobilised for service in the coast defence of New Zealand. They gave up, in many cases, good jobs and seriously impaired their chances of a secure life after the war. *The*

Battery Observation Post, WW 2.
National Archives



Top : Searchlight WW 2.
RNZN Museum
Centre and bottom: Installing 4-inch
guns, 1938.
National Archives





Above: Parade Training.
National Archives
Left: Wren Plotter.
RNZN Museum

Gunner, a small newspaper produced by and for the men stationed at Narrow Neck published this article in 1941:

'... should enemy warships raid New Zealand ports and the gunners go into action, they would be regarded as heroes but, what is more important, they would be on an equal footing with the men now overseas, when it came to providing for 'returned' soldiers'.

'But it is obviously absurd that coast gunners should have to pray for the appearance of an enemy warship in order to be assured of [a] decent job after the war...'

'So let your views be known and voice expression to a definite grievance which unfortunately, it is beyond the power of the army itself to

remedy. It is, you see, a matter of politics - LR.'

Other articles reported social events. The men celebrated Christmas in 1941 with a dinner of *'delicacies such as trifles, jellies, fruit salad, ice cream... and above all a bottle of Waitemata each, donated by Dominion Breweries.'* Many of the gunners at Takapuna took part in sporting events such as rugby, boxing, basketball, tennis, table tennis, athletics and swimming at Cheltenham Beach and Milford Baths.

Women at War

Unlike their British counterparts New Zealand women were never conscripted for service in uniform. The first women to serve in the NZ military forces were a contingent of the newly established New Zealand Army Nursing Service sent to Samoa in 1914.

Following the outbreak of World War 2 it was thought that women's participation in the armed forces would be confined to nursing. Meanwhile women anxious to help the war effort

joined a multitude of civilian women's volunteer organisations which sprang up throughout New Zealand. One of the

Top: Digging trenches
National Archives
Below: Wren signaller.
RNZN Museum

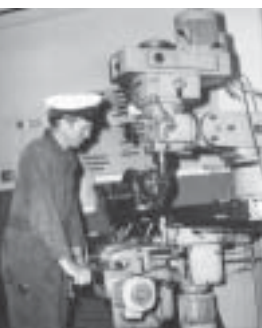


WAACs at Narrow Neck, 1945
Pat Sherwood



Left: Lieutenant PN Wright and SL Officer Cadet Class 1, 1965. RNZN Museum

Apprentice Training RNZN Museum



the stables used by the Mounted Rifles in World War I.

Another woman, Peggy, having completed basic WWSA training was told to report to the Dental Section at Narrow Neck. *She recalls: "One of the hazards of that time was the North Shore water supply which came from Lake Pupuke. Who could complain, with our situation on Auckland's lovely North Shore – beaches on two of the Camp boundaries, bus at the gate to Devonport..."*

"As the war advanced it became a very busy camp. The section was responsible for the dental health of all Heavy Artillery, Light AA and Searchlight Units on the North Shore, Hauraki Gulf Island Units and one at Bastion point, as well as NMD S1 and allied Corps."

Many of the positions occupied by male naval ratings were taken over by women civilians before the formation of the Women's Royal New Zealand Naval Service (WRNZS) was approved by Cabinet in 1942. It is known that a small number of Wrens served at Narrow Neck.

The Post War Years

At the end of World War 2 Fort Takapuna became the headquarters of Auckland's coast defences. Two of the 4-inch guns had been sent to

Left: 1960s Former Artillery Barracks as HQ Field Force and RASC prior to conversion to RNZN OTS. RNZN Museum

largest was the NZ Womens War Service Auxilliary (WWSA). They trained in marching, signalling, (by morse code, wireless and flag), driving cars and riding motorcycles. Not only were they not paid; they had to buy their own uniforms. Members of the WWSA transferred to the New Zealand Women's Army Auxilliary Corps, known as the 'WAACs', on its formation in 1942. Two women who served at Narrow Neck Camp recorded their experiences. One was posted to Camp Hospital Narrow Neck while still a member of the WWSA and recalls that, at that time there were no women's quarters, so the WWSA girls lived in the nurses quarters. When they became WAACs they were housed in the old hay loft above

Tonga during the war, one from the Auckland War Memorial Museum. It was returned to the museum in 1951. Two guns remain there to this day. Two more were scrapped. In the early 1950s three 3.7 inch guns and a 6-pounder were emplaced at Fort Takapuna, but were scrapped in 1956 when coast defence was abandoned. In November 1946 the Camp Hospital was leased to the Auckland Hospital Board and used as a maternity facility until 1958. Civilian activities further encroached on the camp in 1947. At the request of the Department of Labour and Employment four barracks were converted into a temporary camp for female immigrants. That part of the camp was handed back to the army in 1952.

When the army moved off North Head, Narrow Neck Camp was redesignated Fort Cautley, the old military name for the army establishment on North Head. Fort Takapuna now became the home of regular Army units stationed in central Auckland but was mainly used for Territorial Army training.

In 1963 the Navy's new entry training establishment HMNZS TAMAKI was shifted from Motuihe Island and for



Kit inspection 1992.
Command Photographic Unit

some years was co-located with the Army at Narrow Neck. The Navy built a Gunnery School near the old fort and in 1965 opened an Officer Training School at Narrow Neck, in the former Artillery Barracks where it remains to this day. In 2000 the Department of Conservation took over part of the headland as a Historic Reserve. The Navy remains on site but HMNZS TAMAKI was decommissioned in November 2000. The Officer and Trade Training Schools at Narrow Neck are now part of the RNZN College.

Passing Out Parade 1980s.
Command Photographic Unit





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