

NEWSLETTER

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Pirongia Heritage & Information Centre

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What happened to the Magazine?

Warren Gumbley's sketch of the Alexandra East Redoubt, printed in the last Newsletter, shows a *magazine* in the south-east bastion. This kind of magazine was not a periodical publication but a store for explosives, arms or other military provisions.

In March 1877 when the Defence Department had assumed responsibility for all such magazines in the colony, documents in the National Archives tell us that Lt Col Lyon, the Armed Constabulary Commander in Hamilton, reported on the state of the Alexandra magazine which he said had been constructed by the AC in 1872 at government expense, 200 yards from any other building. It was built of kahikatea timber and measured 18 feet (5.5 m) by 16 feet (4.9 m) with a height of 6 feet (1.8 m) in an excavated site. Its roof was of galvanised iron, covered by half a metre of earth, which meant that when complete it was underground. Lyon said that the magazine was in the charge of the Alexandra AC Station and within a redoubt, although we understand that by then the East Redoubt was no longer being maintained.

The danger of hostilities along the confiscation line bordering the King Country ended with King Tawhiao's declaration of peace in July 1881, and by 1884, the AC Station had closed. Its headquarters building in Bellot Street was removed in 1886, leaving the magazine as the only remaining AC construction at Alexandra. Early in 1888, G T Wilkinson, the local government agent, reported on the state of the magazine to Inspector Kiely, commander of the Waikato Police Force which had assumed responsibility for it when the AC was disbanded. His report said:

"The powder magazine here is open at both ends and staples [have been] pulled out of posts, presumably by children playing. There are two kegs of blasting powder, one bag of fuses, two empty boxes of Snider ammunition and two casks of hematite paint inside. Most of the wooden framework at the ends is rotten. [A] local carpenter says [it would] cost £1 (\$2) to put in repair. In the meantime, [I] have got him to nail up boards to make it temporarily secure."

Later in 1888, a directive from the Defence Department gave authority for the contents to be sold locally and its days ended. One wonders what happened to the Snider rounds from the empty boxes. They had lead projectiles that were said to have been favoured by children as fishing sinkers.

The Vulcanology of Mt Pirongia

Geological reports tell us that Mount Pirongia is one of a line of volcanoes, referred to as the Alexandra Volcanic Group, which developed between 2.7 and 1.6 million years ago. The aligned group includes Karioi, Pirongia, Puketotara, Kakepuku, Te Kawa and Tokanui, all linked and located in a 65 kilometre-long volcanic chain. Of these, Mount Pirongia, at 959 metres today is still the tallest, although it has long been recognised that its original height and classic volcanic shape has been significantly eroded. Similarly, it is said that Maungatautari, which evolved about a million years after Pirongia, was at least 100 metres taller.



Oliver McLeod
Vulcanologist

Late in January, the Centre was visited by Oliver McLeod, a PhD student at the University of Waikato who is currently writing a report on findings from his research into the volcanology of Mount Pirongia. Oliver told us that he has mapped the volcanic features of the mountain, including its multiple vents, identified for the first time the characteristics of its volcanic ash, and has produced evidence that Pirongia was in fact probably some 300 metres taller than it is today. He points out that much of the original cone included ash and loose rock materials prone to erosion.

A photograph of a model showing the Alexandra Volcanic Group from a recent publication is available for viewing at the Centre. It shows that there were six vents on Pirongia, including Pukehoua.

At Lake Mangakaware

On 17 February, seven members and friends enjoyed a walk to one of the Lake Mangakaware swamp pa sites. The lower water table during dry conditions made this an ideal time to walk at this very pretty lake.



Thanks for Support

- **BRENT MEALING** for an articulate presentation when he spoke on behalf of the Centre at a meeting about the siting of a new playground in the Paimarie Reserve.
- **ROBERT MCWHA** for successful spinal surgery on a mannequin who lost her head.
- **JOY MCGREGOR** who regularly fills in at the desk at short notice.

AC Sgt John Castle DCM

Sgt John Castle was an AC Sergeant at Alexandra in the 1870s. A recent inquiry about him by his great-grand-daughter drew our attention to a man with an interesting history.

Castle came to New Zealand from Burma in 1864 as a Corporal with the 68th Regiment, the Durham Light Infantry, which was first stationed near Tauranga. It fought at Gate Pa and later in Whanganui and Taranaki where Castle was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for gallantry at Kakarama. He was honourably discharged in early 1866, married Frances Brady in Tauranga and enlisted as a substitute in the 1st Waikato Regt with which he served until it was disbanded in 1867.

After short periods of service with the Opotiki Bushrangers and the East Coast Cavalry, in October 1868 Castle became a Sergeant in No 4 Division of the Armed Constabulary with which he was to serve for 16 years. Much of this service was in the Waikato/Waipaa area where he supervised roading working parties, and was involved with the establishment of a redoubt at Roto-o-rangi in 1873. He then appears to have been based at Alexandra until the late 1870s. Clara, the Castles' third daughter was born and baptised here. The family were members of the St Saviour's Church congregation and John was active in the Masonic Lodge.

Family stories indicate that he was later transferred to Auckland where he became a member of the NZ Defence Force when the AC was re-organized in 1886.

From that time he was a drill-instructor to volunteer units in Wellington, Dunedin and again in Wellington where he retired with the rank of sergeant-major before moving to Stratford in Taranaki where he lived until his death in 1905. Frances lived in Taranaki until she passed away in 1929. They both lie in the Te Henui Cemetery in New Plymouth.

From the Committee

You may have noticed that the Newsletter letterhead no longer includes a web address for the Centre webpage. The reason is that despite high hopes and intensive work by Secretary Paula McWha, the webpage has proved too complicated, inflexible and costly for us to manage. It was not fulfilling its intended purpose. So it has been closed down.

At the same time, however, Paula is operating a Facebook page which is receiving regular hits. It gives us some sort of electronic media presence.

If we are to have an effective website, what is needed is a resident geek! Any offers?

New & Improved

Two of our displays are currently being updated.

- Barbara Walter & Marilyn Yeates continue to work on an upgrade of the display about the former Alexandra Redoubts.

- Haupai Puke is working with another group on a major revision of the Maori display.

They expect a diorama of the Waipa Basin to be completed in the next two or three weeks.

Digital copies of photographs of King Tawhiao are to be purchased from the Australian National Library.

Condolences

We were saddened to learn of the passing of Haupai's husband, David, and extend to her and her family our deepest sympathy.

A New Computer

Recently, a generous donation from Ross & Shirley Scown made possible the purchase of a second computer now located at the reception desk. It will be used for administrative purposes by Andrea and those volunteers on duty who are computer users.

The old computer which has been given a new lease of life with a solid state disk drive, has been re-located in the archive room where it is being used for accessioning and the maintenance of our archives records. This will allow Ros Empson and others helping her to work without unnecessary clutter on the computer desktop and fewer interruptions that are inevitable in the reception area.

Ros and Garry Howard are sorting out the separation of the two sets of functions and Ros has become the Administrator of the Centre's computer system.

Welcome new members

- Marion Bowers
- Tony Giles

Disclaimer:

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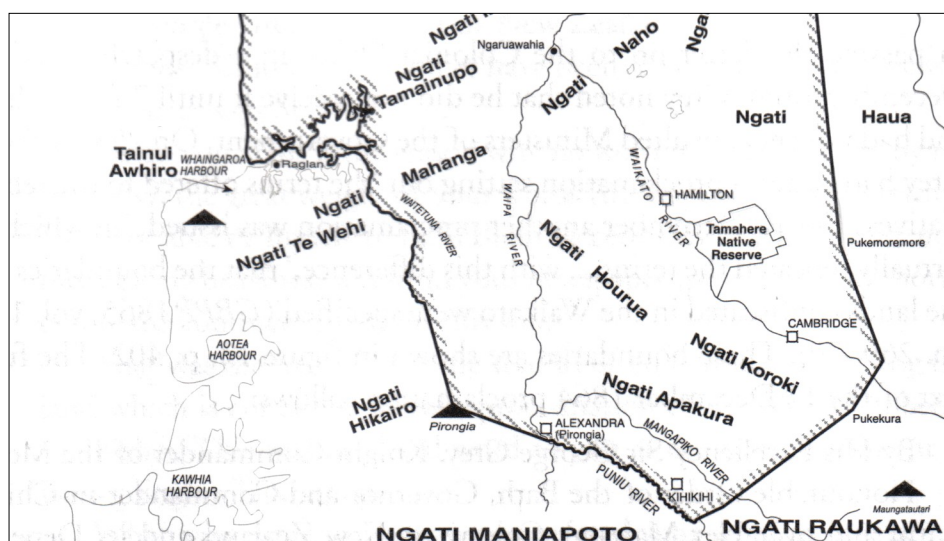
Aukati or Confiscation Line?

Following the battle at Orakau in April 1864, the Kingitanga withdrew south of the Puniu River into Ngati Maniapoto territory which for 17 years became the King's Country, a separate Maori jurisdiction. Later in 1864, the government confiscated more than a million acres of land north of the Puniu River and west of a line between Orakau and Maungakawa near Cambridge. The confiscation boundary also extended from the junction of the Puniu to the peak of Mount Pirongia and followed the Waitetuna Valley north to the upper Raglan Harbour.

The boundary of the extensive confiscated territory was in government terms the *confiscation line*. It defined the limits of the confiscated lands.

The response of the Kingitanga to the confiscation or *raupatu*, as they called it, was to impose a boundary to the King's territory, the Rohe Potae as they knew it. Their boundary was called an *aukati*, a line not to be crossed. In other words, they imposed a restriction on Pakeha crossing the boundary without the approval of the Kingitanga and were prepared to defend that restriction.

In the early 1860's the Kingitanga had previously imposed an aukati along the Mangatawhiri Stream, near Pokeno, defining the northern boundary of the King's territory at that time. Andrew Kay who ran a store near there later recalled a post bearing a formal notice making it clear that Pakeha could proceed beyond the boundary only with the approval of the King. It was this aukati that was crossed by General Cameron's troops at the direction of Governor Grey, on 12 July 1863 to commence the invasion of the Waikato that eventually led to the wholesale confiscation of Maori lands after the battle at Orakau. Thus, the aukati along the Puniu and beyond was the second aukati imposed by the Kingitanga.



Waipa tribal land confiscated by the government in 1864.

In the 1870s the boundary along the Puniu became increasingly permeable. Maori from the Rohe Potae regularly crossed the boundary to places like Alexandra to trade pigs and horticultural produce, particularly grain, at trading stores run by settlers like Hill, Duffus and Aubin. And from 1873, members of King Tawhiao's family visited the settlement, usually accompanied by Pakeha Maori who lived beyond the confiscation line. At the same time, the policing of the aukati at the Puniu appears to have become less strict. Newspaper reports indicate that some Pakeha crossed the boundary, although there was a severe restriction on how far they were allowed to go and there were always risks involved. It appears that no one went to or beyond Otorohanga without permission; the Kingitanga leadership was centred at Tokangamutu near Te Kuiti, and after 1875 at Hikurangi on the hills beyond Ngutunui.

Writers such as Dick Craig referred to the confiscation line (particularly along the Puniu) as the *aukati line*. However, it is useful to remember that in fact the terms *confiscation line* and *aukati* had different meanings. Both are important for a full appreciation of the history of the Waipa and the King Country.

Where was the Native Hospital?

A newspaper entry in December 1872 tells that a Native Hospital was nearing completion at Alexandra, on a "fine breezy hill" south of the township on the eastern side of the river. It was customary at the time to locate hospitals on higher land where breezes might blow away the *miasma* associated with unhealthy vapours and mists believed to be sources of infection. There were two Reserve sections (Sections 123 and 141) near the river end of Hudson Street and it seems that the hospital was probably built on one of these.

There is no evidence that the building ever functioned as a hospital. However, in the late 1880s, after the coming of peace in 1881 it was being used by the Native Agent G.T. Wilkinson as the Native Office until it was destroyed by a fire in surrounding gorse in December 1888.