

## Albert Barracks and the Spatial History of Auckland's New Zealand Wars

*Disclaimer: These notes were created by a student contracted to the project. They are the original notes and have not been edited, and therefore should not be regarded as necessarily authoritative. However, they contain insights which we believe teachers will find useful along with suggestions for other sources, both primary and secondary. We thank the student for the historical skills and work that went into the construction of the file.*

### Curriculum relevance

The Albert Barracks relate to several key themes in the Aotearoa New Zealand Histories curriculum. The barracks demonstrate the **centrality of colonisation and settlement** in a very literal way, as a military installation located in the heart of Auckland. This physical centralisation provides a window into the importance of cultural and military colonisation to the city's governors and early inhabitants. Moreover, Albert Barracks highlight that **Māori history was foundational and continuous** in Auckland. The site of the barracks had similarly been used by Māori for fortification and settlement. Pākehā thus built on a Māori foundation of military activity in this area. Māori presence did not end with the establishment of the barracks, as Māori labourers were involved in its construction. Albert Barracks also facilitated **relationships and connections between people and across borders** in other ways. Physically, it was a transitory space where soldiers, citizens, and their families came together and each found a sense of safety. More significantly, this resource box presents a range of different ways in which the barracks were experienced differently by these different groups.

The structure of this resource box also facilitates conversations about different types of sources, why these convey different perspectives, and the fact that places and the environment itself have agency in shaping historical experiences.

### Topic Overview

The area around Albert Park has a long history of both military and non-military settlement. Until the 1740s, it constituted part of the rohe of Ngāti Te Ata Waiohua and was home to the settlement of Mangahekeka. This village was sacked by Ngāti Whātua-o-Ōrākei under the leadership of Tūperiri. Ngāti Whātua established a kainga, associated with the name Rangipuke, as well as a fortified pā, Te Horotiu, located at the north-west of present-day Albert Park. This pre-European history of conflict reflects the fact that this area, which is geographically elevated and suitable for growing crops, was both desirable and easily defensible. The environment itself has shaped the way in which Māori and Pākehā alike acted upon this land. The Albert Barracks were thus one stage in a layered history of conflict around the Rangipuke area, a history which would continue during World War II.

Pākehā settlement of the Rangipuke area began in 1840, when Ngāti Whātua chief Āpihai Te Kawau, the grandson of Tūperiri, offered it as part of the new capital of Auckland. The city initially had a

single barracks at Point Britomart. As early as 1842, however, Major Bunbury of the 80<sup>th</sup> regiment warned that “[this] site assigned by the late Governor Captain Hobson will be found insufficient in extent to erect the necessary buildings upon.”<sup>1</sup> Bunbury proposed the area of the future Albert Barracks as an alternative. Other notable Aucklanders, including the planner Felton Matthew, objected to this suggestion.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, Governor Fitzroy accepted Bunbury’s proposal in mid-1845, after the sack of Kororāreka had sparked fears that Auckland itself could come under attack. The area which had once formed a defence for Māori now became a defence against them. However, Māori expertise remained foundational to the construction of the new barracks. Alongside Bunbury’s regiment and other imperial forces, Māori labourers constructed the Albert Barracks wall. These labourers were praised for learning European skills and habits, with the *New Zealander* reporting in 1848 that “Out of rough savages, [Mr Graham] has manufactured a set of civilised mechanics.”<sup>3</sup>

The wall was completed in 1852, and with it, the new Albert Barracks closely resembled military defences across the British Empire. The barracks also contained a standard parade ground, surrounded by accommodation for soldiers and other military necessities such as the magazine. In other respects, the unique environment of Rangipuke once again shaped how the land could be used. While mid-nineteenth British military barracks increasingly had running water, the Albert Barracks were serviced by a number of wells.<sup>4</sup> The Albert Barracks was also unusual in that officers were not accommodated within the barracks wall during the 1950s.<sup>5</sup> They were largely housed on Grafton Road until the various functions of the barracks were increasingly centralised.

The barracks were occupied at various times by most imperial forces in New Zealand.<sup>6</sup> This underscores their centrality to the military efforts of the New Zealand War. Soldiers arriving in the colony would typically spend time at Albert Barracks before being sent to various regions, while civilian conscripts were trained at the barracks. Yet despite several scares, the Albert Barracks were never attacked. Their ultimate military purpose of defending Auckland was never tested. Instead, the barracks became a place where soldiers went about their daily lives, including leisure activities. A military theatre was established as well as, from 1856, a military cricket club.<sup>7</sup> Archaeological remains also provide insight into private leisure activities, with a significant number of pipes as well as crib boards and other game pieces emerging from the barracks site.

Not only soldiers lived at the barracks, but a number of their wives and families. The military restricted the number of wives who were supported ‘on the strength’ due to financial reasons and limited space on ships. Yet wives – chosen by lot – were permitted in each company, which consisted

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<sup>1</sup> Clough and Associates Ltd, *Excavation of the Albert Barracks (R11/833): University of Auckland Student Amenities Project*, Auckland: Clough and Associates Ltd Heritage Consultants, 2003, p.9

<sup>2</sup> For further information on this, see Melanie Lovell-Smith, 'Early mapping - Mapping for settlement', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/zoomify/10789/plan-of-auckland-city-1841> (accessed 25 October 2023).

<sup>3</sup> “Native Capabilities,” *New Zealander*, 5 April 1848, p.2.

<sup>4</sup> Clough and Associates Ltd, *Excavation of the Albert Barracks*, p.9.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p.15.

<sup>6</sup> The 12<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 40<sup>th</sup>, 43<sup>rd</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup>, 58<sup>th</sup>, 65<sup>th</sup>, and 70<sup>th</sup> regiments, as well as the Royal Artillery, Royal Engineers, Land Transport Corps, and local militia. See Dennis Scoles, *From Rangipuke to Albert Park: One Hundred Years of Auckland’s History* (Whangarei: Books of Oceania, 2003), p.22.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p.14.

of 100 rank-and-file soldiers.<sup>8</sup> These women would perform domestic tasks in the military, and it was believed that their presence would improve the soldiers' moral conduct. While many regimental wives lived outside the barracks, a January 1864 survey recorded that 58 women and 94 children were accommodated inside the barracks walls.<sup>9</sup> The milestones of colonial life were, for these women and children, shaped by the military. Children were born in the barracks accommodation, regimental daughters were frequently married to one of their father's comrades around their sixteenth birthday, and a number of women and children died at the Albert Barracks.<sup>10</sup> The last point also speaks to the poor mental and physical conditions experienced by families 'on the strength.' In 1864, the *New Zealand Herald* reported that:

There is a great deal of complaint and bitter feeling amongst the soldiers generally at the want of liberality with which their wives are treated... It is the actual truth that many of the men's wives and children are starving; and this is the reward and encouragement given to the poor fellows to spur them on against an enemy that they have no patriotic interest in fighting.<sup>11</sup>

Other issues included a shortage of accommodation and a lack of privacy within the barracks buildings, which drove some women (and also soldiers) towards alcoholism and mental instability. Nevertheless, family life within the barracks continued largely uninterrupted.

Non-military influences also entered Albert Barracks from the outside, in the form of civilians. Leisure activities such as the barracks theatre and sports games typically involved the wider Auckland population. Imperial celebrations were also centred on the barracks, including the Queen's birthday in 1847. For this event, Governor Grey and his wife organised a ball at the barracks' Ordnance Store, which was attended not only by prominent Auckland civilians but by Māori visitors such as the Waikato rangatira (and future Kīngitanga leader) Te Wherowhero.<sup>12</sup> This highlights how the Māori presence and influence at Albert Barracks remained consistent despite the barracks' defensive purpose. Moreover, the celebration hints at the wider significance of the barracks in connecting Auckland to the rest of the colony and to the world. Indeed, in 1863, the barracks even became home to New Zealand's first telegraph pole. As Ian Smith has argued, "as well as military functions, the barracks played an important social role."<sup>13</sup>

The cultural and technological pre-eminence of the Albert Barracks was short-lived. Beginning in 1866, imperial troops were gradually withdrawn from New Zealand. The large barracks were no longer necessary and, in 1870, the colonial government secured the land. Under the oversight of the Auckland Improvement Commission, the majority of the area became Albert Park and the rest was divided and sold. The Auckland Grammar School as well as the Police Barracks were also established on the site in the late 1860s. The civic and civilian significance of the barracks was thereby expanded and formalised. During World War II, the area was again reappropriated for defensive military

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<sup>8</sup> John McLellan, 'Soldiers and Colonists: Imperial Soldiers as Settlers in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand,' Master's thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2017, p.67.

<sup>9</sup> 'Soldiers' Wives and Children', *New Zealander*, 12 January 1864, p.5.

<sup>10</sup> McLellan, 'Soldiers and Colonists', p.66.

<sup>11</sup> 'The Native Rebellion', *New Zealand Herald*, 11 January 1864, p.3.

<sup>12</sup> 'Saturday, May 26, 1849,' *New Zealander*, 26 May 1849, p.2.

<sup>13</sup> Ian Smith, *Pākehā Settlements in a Māori World: New Zealand Archaeology 1769-1860*, Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2019, p.218.

purposes, with tunnels created under the park as air raid shelters. Attempts to excavate and memorialise the extensive military history of Albert Park have, however, been met with difficulties. An 1873 *New Zealand Herald* article stated the government's promise to preserve the North Gate of the barracks as a monument.<sup>14</sup> In circumstances which are perhaps symbolic of the fragmented remembrance of the New Zealand Wars, this promise was never fulfilled and later excavations were unable to locate even remnants of the gate.

## Sources

The organisation of this resource box reflects that spaces like the Albert Barracks are experienced and perceived in various ways. Different types of sources are separated in order to highlight how they create distinct impressions of the barracks. The resource box also offers suggestions as to why these impressions are different, including whose perspective is reflected and the purpose of different types of sources.

### 1. Written sources

#### A) Newspaper reports and advertisements from Albert Barracks

**"Review." *New Zealander*, November 10, 1847.**

<https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZ18471110.2.6>, accessed September 9, 2023.

The review of the 58<sup>th</sup> Regiment, which has stood postponed from Thursday last, owing to the wetness of the weather, came off on yesterday, in the Barrack-square, before Major General Pitt, Commander of the Forces. The day was as fine and propitious as could be wished. The ground was pretty well thronged with well dressed persons of both sexes. At 11 a.m., the Major General appeared, and was received with the usual military salute. The troops, numbering apparently about 450, (including officers), then marched past in review order, and afterwards went through a variety of evolutions, firing by files, by companies, platoons, and general volleys [sic]. The light company advanced and retreated, and performed all their movements to the sound of the bugle. Solid squares were formed to repel supposed charges of cavalry, and general charges in line made afterwards. The whole battalion also performed a number of light infantry movements to the sound of the bugle only, with admirable ease and precision. Finally, the line advanced, presented to the gallant Major General a royal salute, marched back and dispersed to quarters. The review terminated at about half-past 12 o'clock. The band of the 58<sup>th</sup> regt. Continued playing some pleasing pieces till 1 o'clock, when the spectators gradually retired. Among the most distinguished visitors present on the mimic field of battle, were the old native chief Kawiti, who fought in conjunction with Heki [Hōne Heke] at Ruapekapeka, out trusty ally Tamati Waka [Nene], and the captive chief Te Rauparaha. The last-named chief seemed to have paid unusual attention to his toilette, appearing attired in gold-laced forage cap, blue frock coat, adorned with gold epaulettes, and gold-laced trousers. Kawiti simply wore over his blue serge shirt a red blanked, of good British manufacture. Tamati Waka dressed as usual, somewhat after the manner of an English gentleman.

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<sup>14</sup> "Saturday, March 22, 1873," *New Zealand Herald*, 22 March 1873, p.2.

**“Military Theatre.” *Daily Southern Cross*, April 9, 1850.**

<https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/DSC18500409.2.8>, accessed September 9, 2023.

It is the judicious practice of the present day, to ameliorate the soldiers comfort and condition by every prudent and possible concession; to encourage every rational measure calculated to soften the toils of duty and to attach the men to the service.

To render the soldiers' barrack attractive and to beguile the irksomeness of a garrison life, every manly, every generous sport, is anxiously promoted; and no reasonable amusement is denied that can, with propriety, be allowed. Excellent libraries have been organized; music, dancing, and other rational pleasures have been sanctioned, and every innocent enjoyment likely to begrudge [?] a leisure hour, is not only freely permitted by sedulously encouraged. If such indulgences be considered desirable in England, where the means of recreation are ample, how much more so must they not be in the colonies, where life is stagnant and monotonous to the last degree? – It is this monotony – it is this lack of social and intellectual relaxation that has proved the bane of many a generous youth; and it is this monotony that has but too often been found to be the bitter foe of temperance and of discipline. As a counteracting influence, Military Theatres have experienced the judicious support of many Commanding Officers. We have ourselves beheld the advantages resulting from their establishment, in more garrisons than one; for, the occupation afforded to many, not merely in acting, but in scene painting, carpentering, tailoring, and all the varied requirements of the histrionic art, not only engages the leisure of the parties so employed, but attracts a considerable share of attention from a large number of spectators anxious to witness and ready to appreciate a comrade's performance.

As an auxiliary of civilization, as an incentive to excellence in taste, as the promoter of vigour and eloquence in composition, we have ever held the dramatic art to be pre-eminent. [...]

The theatre in the Albert Barracks is a remarkably neat one, and the great obstacles with which, in materiel and personnel, it has to contend, being taken into account, the arrangements and performances are such as deserve to experience the generous support they receive, especially in a town where nothing in the shape of public amusement is to be found.

**“Performances of *The Nervous Man*, *Lady of the Lake*, and *St. Patrick's Day*,” August 27, 1855,**

**Ephemera EPH-W3-16, Auckland Museum. URL: [https://www.aucklandmuseum.com/collections-research/collections/record/am\\_library-ephemera-18161?k=military%20theatre&ordinal=0](https://www.aucklandmuseum.com/collections-research/collections/record/am_library-ephemera-18161?k=military%20theatre&ordinal=0)**



“Native Labour.” *New Zealander*, June 9, 1847.

<https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZ18470609.2.5>, accessed September 9, 2023.

Amidst the sounds of war from the South, we turn with no little pleasure to witness the progress which the Natives employed on the Ordnance Works are making in the arts of civilization. New-Zealanders, fresh from the country, appear to acquire a knowledge of all the details of masonry in a few weeks, without, as at home, having to undergo a lengthened “service vile” in carrying bricks and making mortar. So well pleased are the directors of the works, that, we understand, it is their intention in future to complete the stone-work of the Boundary Wall at Albert Barracks with Native masons only, under their own superintendance [sic]. The system adopted to encourage them to improve themselves, is highly to be commended. The labourers are divided into three classes, according to their proficiency. Those in the third or entrance class obtain 2x. a day; when they have become good workmen, they come under the second class, and receive 2s. 6d. a day; when these again are capable of undertaking finishing work, and have acquired a certain degree of dispatch, they receive the first class wages of 3s. 6d. a day. In connexion with the Maoris employed at the Barracks is a Night School, where, in addition to the usual routine, they are instructed in those terms of art which are found in connexion with their particular employment.

These newspaper articles and advertisements from Albert Barracks overwhelmingly reflect a civilian perspective and target a civilian audience. Several themes become evident in how non-military Aucklanders experienced the barracks. There is an emphasis on social, recreational, and educational events. The military theatre is both recreation for soldiers and entertainment for civilian audiences. This social function, notably, is not limited to Pākehā men. Māori education and training at the barracks is highlighted, and “well dressed persons of both sexes” attended military drills. Moreover,

Albert Barracks is conceptualised a highly performative space. The barracks theatre was a popular attraction, staging pieces which were intimately relevant to military life.<sup>15</sup> The drills of the 58<sup>th</sup> regiment are also described as performances (with musical accompaniment of the regimental band) while the costumes of the spectators are carefully described. Māori were also part of the spectacle at Albert Barracks. It is particularly notable that a number of rangatira, including Tamati Waka Nene, Kawiti, and Hōne Heke encountered each other and various Pākehā leaders at the Barracks. This emphasis on appearance and performance reinforces the importance of the barracks as an important cultural site in early Auckland.

The cultural impact of Albert Barracks took a particular form, which is suggested in the repeated references to civilisation. Contemporary commentators felt that the military theatre had a civilising effect on the soldiers and the city at large, and praised that Māori labourers were instructed in “the arts of civilisation.” In both cases, it becomes evident that the cultural influence of the Albert Barracks was an overwhelmingly British one. The Albert Barracks thus not only enabled the military colonisation of New Zealand, but contributed to its cultural colonisation.

## **B) Texts on the barracks wall**

There have been three different inscriptions on the Albert Barracks wall over the course of its history. Initially, a Māori inscription was located on the north gate, although this was illegible by 1873. Historians have made several suggestions about the text of this inscription, including the idea that it was a warning to Northern iwi which read:

Kia tupato.<sup>16</sup>

In 1915, the Auckland Civic League (a women’s organisation which aimed to improve amenities in the city) installed a plaque on the wall. This was originally located near Princes St, then moved opposite the University of Auckland General Library during the construction of the Arts Building c. 1926. The plaque was vandalised and removed in October 1983, following criticism from Māori students about its imperialist message. The text was:

To commemorate the union and comradeship of Pakeha and Maori during the Great European War this tablet was fixed by the Auckland Civic League Sept 1915 on the remnant of the barrack wall built by friendly Maoris in 1848 after the burning of Kororareka.<sup>17</sup>

The current inscription, located on the extant portion of the wall next to the General Library, reads:

This is a remnant of the Albert Barracks wall which was started in 1846 and by 1852 enclosed some 23 acres of land.

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<sup>15</sup> *St Patrick’s Day* is a play about a soldier’s forbidden relationship with a civilian woman.

<sup>16</sup> Rowan Light, ‘Crossing “fields of our blood”: The Development of the New Zealand Wars Exhibition at Auckland War Memorial Museum, 1994-96,’ *New Zealand Journal of History*, 56, 2, 2022, p.58.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Albert Barracks Wall,’ *NZHistory*, <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/photo/albert-barracks-wall>, accessed October 23, 2023.

These plaques and inscriptions contributed to the construction of Albert Barracks in a very literal way. Each one transformed the meaning of the barracks wall. The original inscription, regardless of its exact wording, participated in the defensive function of the barracks. Its use of te reo directly addressed Māori, while the position on the exterior of the gate created a clear spatial division between the imperial soldiers and their Māori opponents outside the barracks. Subsequently, the 1915 plaque transformed the barracks into a monument to racial unity. World War I saw Māori fight alongside Pākehā in the Māori contingent and the Māori (Pioneer) Battalion on the Western Front. In this context, the Albert Barracks were recast as a precedent for such bicultural military co-operation. Several elements of this inscription, however, reveal the ambivalent race relations of this period. The inscription refers to Pākehā, and uses the Māori name of Kororāreka, which indicates some level of engagement with te reo and te ao Māori. Yet it is written in English, suggesting that the intended readers of this message of racial unity were not Māori but Pākehā. This impression is reinforced by the reference to the 'Great European War', which positions the New Zealand Wars within a wider history of glorified imperial expansion. Not just the meaning of the barracks changed with the 1915 plaque, but the people to whom it was meaningful.

The current plaque reflects yet another shift in the significance of the Albert Barracks. It does not express an overt warning or celebration, yet its silence reflects the uneasy remembrance of the New Zealand Wars in the present day. The inscription renders the Albert Barracks almost invisible. It characterises the extant wall as a "remnant," evoking the impression of a distant past and eschewing the language of commemoration or memorialisation. The purpose of the wall, as well as the imperial soldiers, families, and Māori people who engaged with the barracks, are completely erased. By emptying the barracks, the plaque further reduces their perceived significance. While the barracks – like the New Zealand Wars themselves – are not forgotten completely, this plaque contributes to the recent marginalisation of this period in New Zealand history.

## **2. Maps**

**A) City of Auckland, New Zealand, from actual survey by J. Vercoe and E.W. Harding, 1866, Map 18, Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections.**



High resolution image with zoom function available at:

<https://kura.aucklandlibraries.govt.nz/digital/collection/maps/id/610/rec/2>

This is the earliest extant map of the Albert Barracks. The barracks were incidental to its wider purpose, which was to provide a survey of Auckland with indications of where the city could be expanded. As such, it is particularly striking that the barracks are represented in significant detail, with individual buildings charted and marked. This reinforces the significance of Albert Barracks to the city of Auckland. The geographical dominance of the barracks – both its size and relative centrality – also become apparent.

- B) Plan of Albert Barracks, compiled from the field notes of a survey by T. Frissell, September 1871, compiled by R. S. Fletcher, 1871, Map 108, Old Colonists Museum Collection, Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections.**

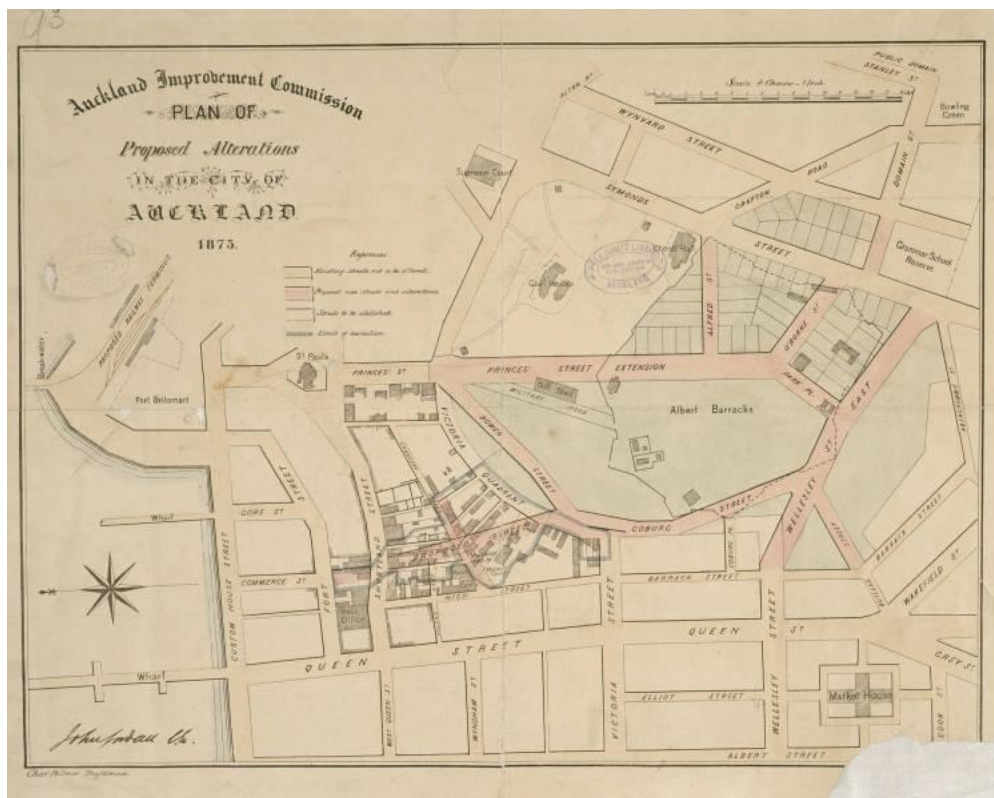


High resolution image with zoom function available at:

<https://kura.aucklandlibraries.govt.nz/digital/collection/maps/id/5729/rec/1>

This map was created in the mid-twentieth century using a set of detailed field notes from 1871. It provides the most comprehensive reconstruction of the buildings within Albert Barracks, revealing the range of facilities and functions of the site. Examples include a garden, the grammar school (although this did not exist for the majority of the barracks' military usage), wells and water pumps, and a military storehouse. Moreover, the inclusion of the military road, government grounds, and the Northern Club (top right, previously an army officer's mess) highlight several ties of the barracks to the administration and social elite of the city.

**C) Auckland Improvement Commission plan of proposed alterations in the City of Auckland, 1873, Map 3532, Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections.**



High resolution image with zoom function available at:

<https://kura.aucklandlibraries.govt.nz/digital/collection/maps/id/472/rec/10>

This map was created by the Auckland Improvement Commission after it took on responsibility for the land around Albert Barracks. The outline of the barracks is represented on top of projected street extensions and the new Albert Park. As such, the map provides a useful sense of where the barracks were located in relation to the present-day city. It highlights that the current city layout is not an inevitability, but a historically constructed decision.

Overall, maps can provide insight into soldiers' lives at Albert Barracks. Cartography is a precise and functional way of conceptualising space, evoking the military precision with which these lives was regulated. In particular, the 1871 map demonstrates the range of different buildings and structures that enabled soldiers at the barracks to carry out their military roles. Comparing the maps reveals how these roles were centralised and barracks became increasingly self-contained. The 1866 map does not include the commissariat office (which was initially located on Princes Street), yet this has been relocated to the interior of the barracks in the 1871 map. The former map also does not include sergeants' quarters, although these are present in the latter. These changes suggest that the barracks became less reliant on the surrounding city, as its own resources and facilities expanded. This is a markedly different story to newspaper reports, which demonstrates the need for caution when using a single type of source.

Despite its mathematical nature, moreover, cartography is not value-neutral. These maps reflect a distinctly Pākehā conception of linear space, which is echoed in the distinctly grid-like layout of the barracks buildings. As such, this representation of the Albert Barracks also contributes to the cultural colonisation of the area. In particular, the purposes of the 1866 map (surveying for the future

expansion of Auckland) and the 1873 map (creating Albert Park and subdividing the other half of the barracks) explicitly relate to land ownership. By mapping the Albert Barracks, Pākehā surveyors and administrators asserted their ability to control the area around Rangipuke.

### 3. Photographs and artistic representations

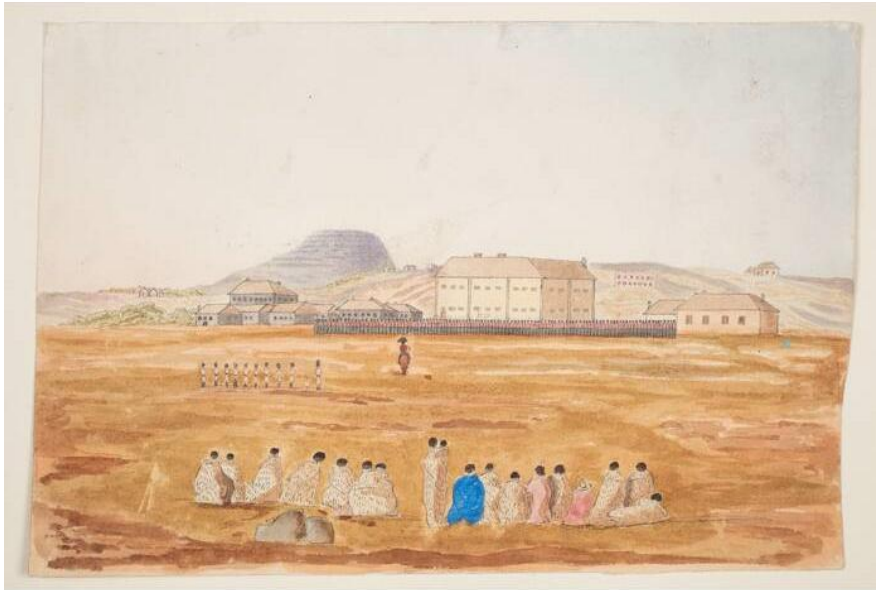
**A) Unknown photographer, 'Imperial regiments', c.1860s, PH-PR-213, Auckland Museum  
Tāmaki Paenga Hira.**



This photograph shows six imperial soldiers at Albert Barracks, from the 9<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>, and 68<sup>th</sup> regiments. On one hand, the imposing wall behind the soldiers – with loopholes for defence purposes – combined with their military uniforms and the muskets which three of them hold, hints at the military strictness of barracks life. However, the soldiers' postures are relaxed – one rests his arm on another's knee while holding a dog on his lap – and the regiments are mixed rather than strictly separated. The photograph reveals a defining tension in the Albert Barracks, a space which was both military and social, professional and domestic.

This makes it tempting to believe that photography provides an objective representation of the barracks. Yet the image is carefully staged. The barracks wall is used as a backdrop while all the soldiers are clearly aware that their picture is being taken. The photograph thus represents the soldiers' self-presentation to their comrades or the wider Auckland population. In this light, the muskets, the imposing wall, and the casual poses all demonstrates a belief in their right to occupy and violently colonise the surrounding land. Photographs of the Albert Barracks are far from neutral reflections of military life, but rather provide insight into the wider purpose of the barracks in the New Zealand Wars.

**B) John Johnson, 'New Barracks, Auckland,' 1848, PD-1963-8-10, Auckland Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira.**



This watercolour was most likely painted by the Colonial Surgeon John Johnson. As such, it is also a product of the dual artistic and social lives which soldiers led at the Albert Barracks. The painting also reveals how the barracks contributed to British colonisation and domination of the land. Soldiers parade in an orderly line in the barracks square. The site also has commanding views over the rest of the city, including Maungawhau/Mt Eden where the stone for the barracks wall was being quarried when this painting was created. A particularly interesting feature is the inclusion of Māori in the foreground. Viewers look over their shoulders, thus are implicitly encouraged to view the Albert Barracks through (what Johnson imagined to be) the eyes of Māori at the time.

#### **4. Archaeological discoveries**

##### **A) Buttons**



Left to right:

AR7644.35 button. Relating to Albert Barracks well. Site N42/876 [R11/833]. Auckland Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira.

AR7644.28 button. Relating to Albert Barracks well. Site N42/876 [R11/833]. Auckland Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira.

AR7644.31 button. Relating to Albert Barracks well. Site N42/876 [R11/833]. Auckland Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira.

These military uniform buttons express the experiences of rank-and-file soldiers at the Albert Barracks. They are specific to each regiment or department (left to right: 58<sup>th</sup>, Commissariat, 40<sup>th</sup>) reflecting how military life was organised and hierarchical down to the smallest uniform detail. Cumulatively, the range of buttons found in excavations of the Albert Barracks also attests to the number of regiments who were accommodated there. An image emerges of the barracks as a busy and transitory space, the origin point for many of the military efforts of the New Zealand Wars. It is also worth noting that many of these uniform buttons were created in the United Kingdom. The 40<sup>th</sup> regiment button has the maker's mark 'P.Tait and Co. Limerick' on the back, referring to Sir Peter Tait, the Irish producer of British army uniforms from 1854 onwards. These buttons thus also speak to the wider colonial context of the New Zealand Wars, positioning the Albert Barracks as an imperial outpost.

## **B) Pipe**



AR7644.11 clay pipe, bowl and stem. Relating to Albert Barracks well. Site N42/876 [R11/833]. Auckland Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira.

One of many pipes recovered from the excavation of the Albert Barracks well, this also provides insight into the everyday life of soldiers. It becomes possible to reconstruct soldiers' leisure activities such as smoking. The fact that this pipe has been repaired speaks to the care that soldiers took with their belongings, and the value that the owner assigned to their pipe. Indeed, the maker McDougall was located in Glasgow. McDougall pipes were produced from 1846 and soon dominated the mid-nineteenth century market, and have since been discovered in archaeological excavations in Australia, Jamaica, Easter Island and Canada.<sup>18</sup> Much like the buttons, this reinforces the imperial orientation of soldiers and the Albert Barracks.

## **C) Parts of women's shoes**

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<sup>18</sup> "Who was smoking these pipes?" Kelley House Museum, <https://www.kelleyhousemuseum.org/who-was-smoking-these-pipes/>, accessed 23 October 2023.



a Small heel and heeltip, possibly of a woman's shoe



c Facing with hooks (the only example found), from a machine stitched shoe, possibly a woman's

As pictured in Clough and Associates Ltd, *Excavation of the Albert Barracks (R11/833): University of Auckland Student Amenities Project*, Auckland: Clough and Associates Ltd Heritage Consultants, 2003, pp.218-9.

These objects attest to women's histories at the barracks. The heel on the left belongs to a boot – a practical form of shoe – which perhaps hints at the priorities and conditions for women in this space. Lacing hooks were also found, which would have been used on shoes like the example on the right.<sup>19</sup> As such, the shoes not only demonstrate women's presence but hint at the role which women had in mending clothes and performing domestic tasks at the barracks. The poor condition of these fragments is also significant. Leather – which was also the material used for other women's items such as sewing kits – deteriorates faster than the metal used for men's uniform buttons. While this is not a clearly gendered divide, it is worth considering why items relating to women's histories are comparatively rare even in archaeological investigations.

#### D) Doll/figurine and children's tea set

<sup>19</sup> 217 excavation report



Left: AR7644.19 doll, figurine. Relating to Albert Barracks well. Site N42/876 [R11/833]. Auckland Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira.

Right: As pictured in Clough and Associates Ltd, *Excavation of the Albert Barracks (R11/833): University of Auckland Student Amenities Project*, Auckland: Clough and Associates Ltd Heritage Consultants, 2003, p.77.

This ceramic doll and tea-set were discovered in separate archaeological excavations of the Albert Barracks, demonstrating the widespread and consistent presence of children in this space. They suggest leisure activities and imaginative games, which hints at how children may have experienced the barracks in a very different way to their parents. Moreover, in contrast to the bleak impression conveyed by many written sources (see topic overview), the toys paint a more optimistic picture of children's and family life in the barracks. Indeed, one 1859 account suggests that, while adults may have experienced Albert Barracks as oppressive and chaotic, the children enjoyed the communal atmosphere of the space and its relative freedom:

Serena's next shock was their accommodation. The barracks, which were surrounded by twenty-foot rock walls, had been vacated by the 58<sup>th</sup> regiment just over a year previously, and consisted of a long low building with rows of rough wooden bunks lining the walls. Without any partitions whatever for privacy, over forty families were crowded together in the building. Temporary it might be, but Serena's sense of modesty was outraged. As for rest, it was almost impossible with children racing up and down until late at night.<sup>20</sup>

Overall, archaeological sources provide rare insight into the lives of rank-and-file soldiers as well as women and children at the Albert Barracks. These people's perspectives were often not recorded in written sources or maps, which makes their physical belongings particularly important for understanding how they experienced the barracks. Archaeological remains are also more likely to speak to mundane and everyday elements of military life, compared to newspaper accounts or visual representations of special occasions. These sources thus demonstrate how the New Zealand Wars,

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<sup>20</sup> Cited in Scoles, *From Rangipuke to Albert Park*.

far from being understood as exceptional, were a continuous backdrop to Aucklanders' lives in the mid-nineteenth century.

## 5. Physical sites

### A) Albert Barracks wall, University of Auckland



Image: Gavin McLean, 2001, in 'Albert Barracks Wall', New Zealand History, <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/photo/albert-barracks-wall>, (Ministry for Culture and Heritage), accessed September 6, 2023.

This portion of wall is the only remaining section of the Albert Barracks. Its imposing height and the loopholes in the upper section (from which guns could be fired without risk to the people inside) are reminders of the military purpose of the structure. Yet the stone from which the wall is made tells a wider story. It was quarried from Maungawhau/Mt Eden and, when the rest of the barracks was demolished, the stone in these sections was used to build the retaining wall along Kitchener Street, the wall up Bowen Lane, and the boundary walls of several Princes Street houses.<sup>21</sup> As such, the Albert Barracks were built from Auckland and are still built into the city today. This positions the barracks – and the New Zealand Wars – within a cycle of construction and environmental destruction. It becomes evident how fundamental the barracks are to Auckland's past and present.

Despite this significance, the wall remnant is the only overt acknowledgement that a large military structure once stood in the heart of the city. Little information is provided at the site, making it difficult to imagine the extent of the barracks. This raises questions about how the history of Albert Barracks, and the wars more broadly, should be incorporated into twenty-first century Auckland. On one hand, the wall's imposing presence makes it impossible to forget that the barracks existed. However, as it continues to stand at an awkward angle in the university grounds, the physical dislocation of the wall echoes the conceptual unease which surrounds it.

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<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, p.26.