



NZ War Memorial Park and Buckle Street Underpass

Archaeology investigation – What lies beneath...

Before any project begins, big or small, it is important to understand the ground that is being built on and prepare the site for construction. The same is true for the Memorial Park and Buckle Street Underpass project.

Part of our site preparation has been to carry out an archaeological investigation of the area to identify, locate and potentially recover anything of historical significance. Given the history of the Mt Cook area, and Buckle Street in particular, we knew before we started work that there could be some interesting finds underground. We have not been disappointed.

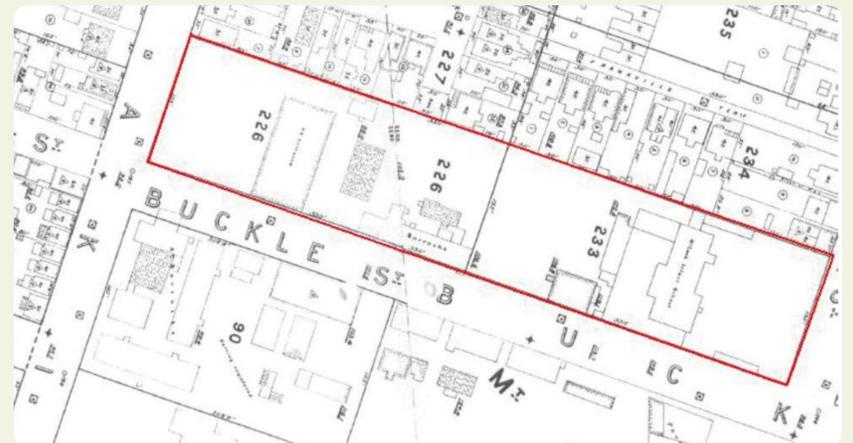
Our construction team, with support and leadership from specialist archaeologists, have uncovered a number of items. Of note, given the area's military history, are the remnants of a gun pit and some pieces of the gun's hydraulic mechanism. This is the round brick structure you can see on the site.

A number of brick walls, including the original wall foundations of the Drill Hall built in the 1880s has also been found (these have also been excavated

for you to view) as have several postholes made of timber, which may relate to the 1840s Mt Cook military encampment.

As expected a number of military artefacts have been recovered, including bullet cases, a regimental button and an ammunition box. Everything we find is being well photographed and documented for future reference before it is removed.

Nothing that has been found as part of the archaeological investigations has been a surprise to us as there is a lot of written material about the history of Mt Cook and Buckle Street. We know the project site itself has been built and redeveloped a number of times and this is illustrated clearly by a number of different demolition layers that have been identified.



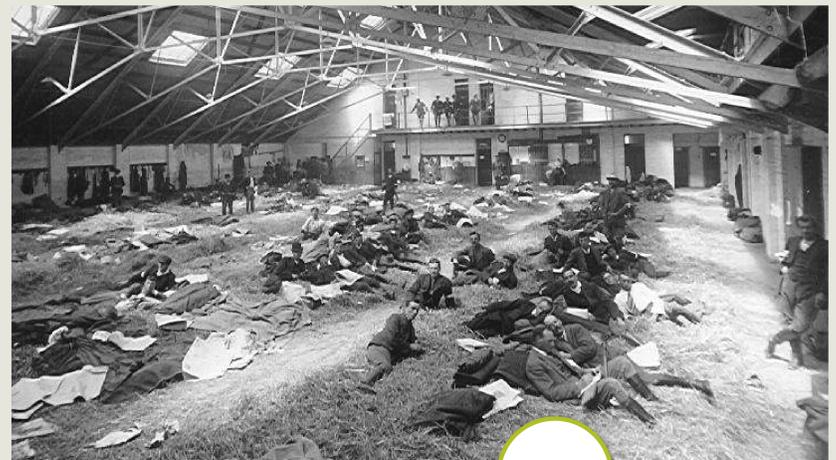
The 1900s Ward plan, noting the area excavated on Buckle Street

A brief look at Mt Cook's Maori and Military history

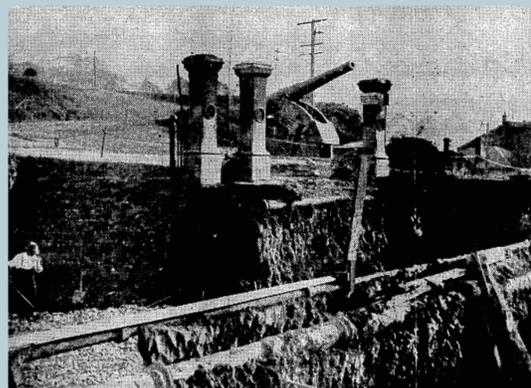
Buckle Street is located on the slopes of Puke Ahu (Mount Cook), which is part of the Te Aro flats that extended from the foreshore around Te Aro Pa. Puke Ahu or Mount Cook area of Buckle Street has a long association with the Te Atiawa/Taranaki Whanui tangata whenua with traditional garden sites covering much of the hill slopes.

Puke Ahu was an important garden site supporting the ancient Pa, Te Akatarawa, which was located around the area now occupied by Wellington College. In the early 19th century Te Aro Pa was located on the harbour foreshore at the end of Taranaki Street, however, its influence extended into this area including the Aro Valley and out to the south coast at Paekawakawa (Island Bay).

The Buckle Street Barracks Garrison Hall 1913



The Armstrong gun



A number of Armstrong guns were brought to New Zealand in the 1880s during a period known as the "Russian Scare". They were used to fortify New Zealand's coast against a Russian invasion and, at the time, were the latest in military technology.

The remnants of the gun pit at the Memorial Park project site relates to a gun that was brought to the Mt Cook Barracks for training purposes. Weighing 13 tons, the Armstrong gun fired a 180 pound (81kg) shell and had a range of 4 miles (about 6.5km). That's the equivalent of catapulting the average male from Buckle Street almost as far as Matiu Somes Island.

Some may wonder if the remnants of the gun pit at the Memorial Park project site relate to an Armstrong gun, but in fact it belongs to a much smaller gun that was brought to the Mt Cook Barracks for training purposes.

The Armstrong gun is reputed to have been buried near the Carillon site because it was so heavy, but not in the area of the Underpass. The images to the left show where the gun was previously sited on Buckle Street.