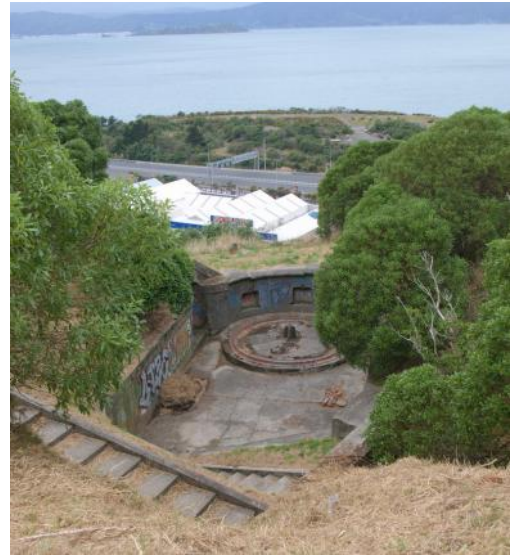


FORT BUCKLEY a Site Visit By Andrew Edgcombe



I thoroughly enjoy looking around historical sites and try and make the most of every opportunity to do so. A recent trip to Wellington gave me a bit of time to explore another of our Capital's hidden treasures. Fort Buckley, which is just south of Kaiwharawhara overlooking the Interisland Ferry Terminal. I have driven the route into Wellington many a time over the last thirty years and was unaware that just above the Spotlight store on the right hand side of the motorway there is a well preserved emplacement which once housed two 64 pound Rifled Muzzle Loading Armstrong Guns with a range of 3200 meters and 12 to 15 Men to crew each gun.

Fort Buckley was built in 1885 in readiness to stave off the imminent Russian invasion that never came. The construction was undertaken by the Field Force of the Armed Constabulary along with a good deal of help from the Public Works Department. A great sense of urgency surrounded the construction of Fort Buckley (considered to be the No2 priority site in the Wellington area) with men working well into the night to complete the Fort by early 1886.

Once the Russian scare had blown over a Russian Warship actually entered Wellington Harbour in 1886 on a good will visit, the ship was the *Vestnik*. The Evening Post from 24th May 1886 noted the *Vestnik* fired a salute to the British Flag to which the Fort Buckley battery replied. Another Salute was fired in honour of Her Majesty's Birthday. That would have been quite a spectacle!

During the Second World War the site was again used for defence purposes with the threat of Japanese invasion an Anti Aircraft gun was sighted on a knoll above the caretaker's house.

Fort Buckley is a site rich in history and well worth a visit, The site can be accessed from Barnard Street; it was a pleasant surprise to note that local residents have taken some pride in this historic site with a big clean up effort having been recently completed in conjunction with the local Council making the site more accessible as it was previously rather overgrown, also there is now signage at the street directing interested parties down a track to Fort. An excellent pamphlet can be had from the information board at the top of the track which contains more in depth information than I have provided here. It is easy to access and close to Wellington City. Make the effort on your next Wellington trip, you won't be disappointed.

