

The First Regiment of Waikato Militia, soon to be stationed in Tauranga, was raised from recruiting in the Australian colonies and in New Zealand during 1863 and early 1864. The three regiments of Waikato militia were formed by the New Zealand government to provide a force of soldier-settlers able to garrison the lands the colonial administrators intended to confiscate from the Kingite 'rebels'. A network of redoubts, garrisoned by soldier-settlers, was planned, intended to intimidate the Maori from further military action and to transform the countryside into European farmlands. The Waikato militia was formed at the beginning of the hostilities and the first three hundred troops of the First Regiment arrived in Tauranga in May 1864. Another draft, of 280 officers and men, together with their families, arrived in June during that year. About 600 militia took part in the battle of Gate Pa. When the Kingites formally surrendered, on 25 July 1864, the militia were left to garrison the Tauranga district, and while they usefully pacified the district, even after the murder of the missionary Carl Volkner at Opotiki in 1865, their usefulness as farmers was less than obvious. In October 1871 a local Ministry of Works officer reported to the Minister of Works that:

*The military settlements . . . are, as military settlements, entire failures. The causes are not far to seek, primarily, the original grantees were not as a whole men likely to succeed as farmers. In the next place, they never had a fair chance of occupying their lands, Maori hostility and the want of any inland communication being quite sufficient to prevent successful settlement. As a result we find only a few hundred acres, immediately around Te Papa, in actual occupation.<sup>4</sup>*

The soldier-settlers had been granted their land subject to their completion of garrison duties. Alarms, summons to drill parades and lack of access to their land, persuaded many to sell, or even desert, their grants, as soon as their three year service had ended and their release from duty secured. The acreages granted were mainly uneconomic and the private soldier received only fifty country acres, that could be swamp or could be separated from his town section by difficult country. Desertion, disaffection, and declining military usefulness so reduced the militia, in numbers and effectiveness, to a liability along the frontier, and led to the creation of a replacement corps, the Armed Constabulary. This new para-military force, part-police and part-soldier, from 1867 to 1883 patrolled the district, protected the mails, guarded court-houses, aided in the construction of new roads and pursued 'rebels' and criminals. From 1868 to 1872 the Tauranga

Armed Constabulary command was involved in the pursuit of Te Kooti, and two inspectors, five sub-inspectors, twenty-three NCOs and 224 constables, guaranteed the peace of a district extending from Taupo through to north of Katikati.

In October 1867 the special militia forces formed for the emergency were disbanded. However, volunteer units still sprang up, to face district emergencies or to meet the need of some local farmer to become a 'Captain'. These corps, mainly cavalry and artillery, were prolific in the 1870s and 1880s, but each company or battery contained only a few men, most of whom designed a uniform of their own choice. By 1871 there were numerous volunteer corps in the Bay of Plenty but their soldiery numbered a mere 85 in all.<sup>5</sup>

The decline of the Volunteer Militia brought only a momentary halt to the expansion of the settler-soldier idea in New Zealand. The militia had provided an example of the new British pattern of a home army, of citizen-soldiers, trained sufficiently to maintain order against rebels and invaders alike. At the close of the 1890s an overseas challenge to Britain's imperial power set alight a fire of patriotism throughout New Zealand that created hundreds of new Volunteer regiments and companies, units that were, this time, to endure. The Hauraki Regiment was one of these new creations.

## REFERENCES

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- 2 G. Mair, *THE STORY OF GATE PA* (Tauranga, 1926).
- 3 *THE TIMES* (London), 24 May 1859
- 4 W. Gifford and H. Williams, *A CENTENNIAL HISTORY OF TAURANGA* (Tauranga 1940), p.264
- 5 *AJHR*, 1871, G—6.