

The Waikato Branch of the New Zealand Founders Society Inc held an outing to the rural village of Pirongia, south-west of Hamilton, on Thursday 17th September 2026. Pirongia was latterly named after the nearby mountain of the same name but was called Alexandra in the 1800s by British settlers. They named it that in honour of Princess Alexandra of Denmark who married Prince Edward, the Prince of Wales, heir to Queen Victoria of Great Britain and the Empire of those days. Two British military redoubts were established in the vicinity during the Land Wars of the 1860s and the Maori people had a large fortification at nearby Paterangi.

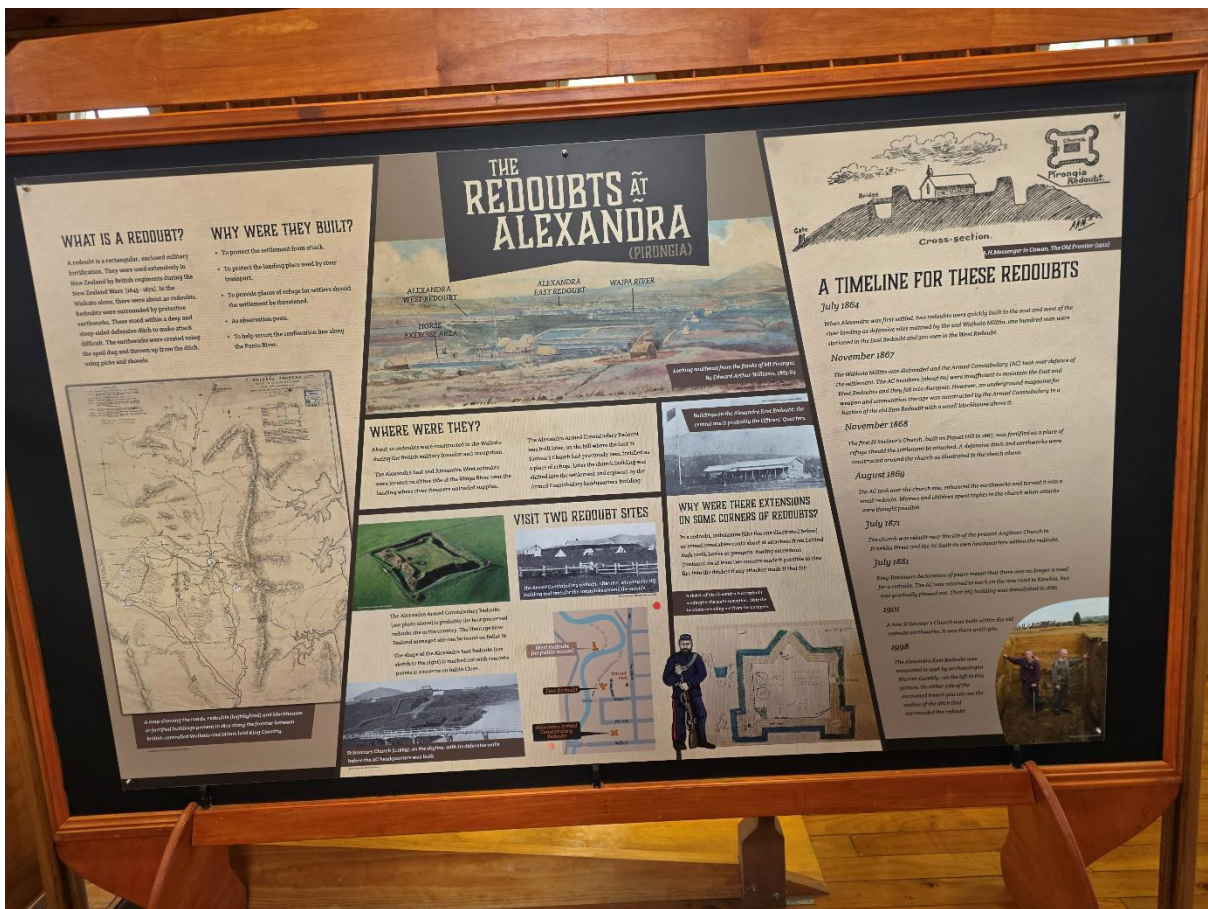
Founders Society members met on the 17th for lunch at the Mountain Folk Cafe in Pirongia, and new member Ian McMichael was presented with his membership certificate by Membership Secretary Carolyn Adams.



After lunch, the group visited the Pirongia Museum and Heritage Centre to listen to presentations given by two museum volunteers, Ros Empson and Allan Hall. They gave very interesting talks about the building, which was the former St. Saviour Church which had been moved several times until being lovingly restored in its present resting-place, colonial families of the area, the redoubts and land wars from 1864 and the Kingitanga movement of the Maori resistance to the Government taking over the Waikato region.

The group spent some time browsing in the museum and learning much from the exhibits on display.





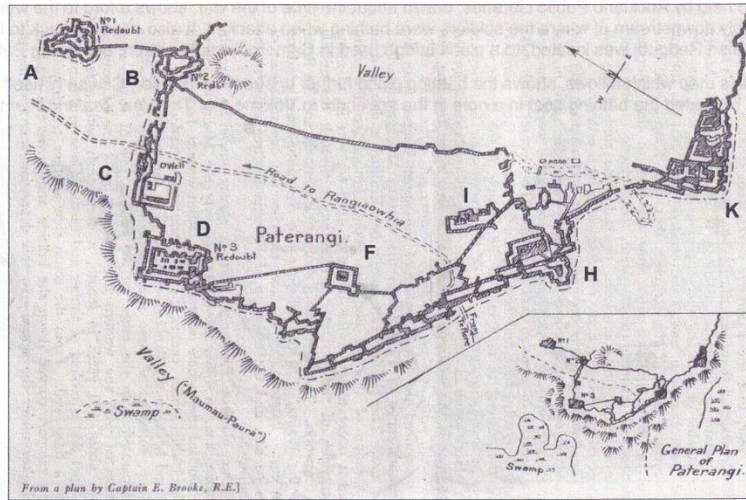
Notes About Paterangi Pa and Waiari Pa

Paterangi Pa, major defence against British advance

(Grid Ref 062581)

A very large pah, part of the so-called Paterangi line from the Waipa to Pukekura. Known mainly from the excellent contemporary documentation, including a plan drawn by British military engineers. It consisted of 9 forts connected by ditches, banks, trenches and rifle pits, as follows:

- A: "Redoubt no 1" A very strong fort entirely surrounded by palisade, to the rear of remainder of the pah & connected to it only by a communication trench.
- B: "Redoubt no 2", at the north end of the fortifications, on an elevation giving good all-round view. Presumably had command functions - a large flagpole/signal mast located here Later the location of British redoubt .
- C: Small fort near where the Pikopiko-Rangiaowhia road crossed the northern fortifications.
- D: Corner "redoubt no 3", very heavily fortified.
- F: A "strong redoubt" to the rear of the fortification ditches & trenches, but connected to them by 3 communication trenches. This appears to have been the main artillery-proof bunker, equivalent to the "citadel" at Rangiriri, but better protected against infantry investment as happened there.
- H: A fort on the west side of a gully, with bastion-like "shell-proof whare", said to have been occupied by Rewi Maniapoto. Capable of delivering flanking fire down into the gully.
- I: A fort to the rear, in line with the expected line of British advance, and probably where the two cannons were located, aimed down the road.
- K: Fort on the other side of the gully from, & complimentary to, fort H. On a salient. H-K was the main front against the expected British advance.
- L: A small fort near the southeast end of the fortifications, probably serving mainly as a lookout.



Each of these forts was comparable in size & strength to Orakau pah. Besides these areas, 3 served as a commissariat, with buildings, potato pits, spring water, and communication trenches radiating out to other parts of the fortification. Altogether there were about 4.3 km of ditches and trenches and 1.03 km of palisade.

Paterangi today is in very poor condition. Presumably most of the ditches & trenches were filled in by the British, Fort F now serves as a silage pit. Houses have been built on fort H, and trees, shelter belts & hedges obstruct views in most directions.

(Grid Ref 058563)

It had been abandoned for some time when the 'Wainui engagement' between British soldiers and local Maori took place in 1864. The ditch in which the final stages of that engagement were fought (illustrated by von Tempsky and others) is still in much the same condition as it was in 1864.

Cowan's map which follows, shows the bathing place further upstream. However, Cowan himself, seems to have changed his mind as he relocated the bathing spot in a note in the appendix to Volume 1 of *The New Zealand Wars*.



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With all sites now forming parts of farms without historical markers, we definitely needed the benefit of Allan's great research and knowledge. The cold wind and grey skies brought our field trip to an end by about 4.00 p.m. This was a most interesting outing!