

Quarantine Island in WW1

About 900 soldiers, doctors and civilians, spent some time on the island during WW1, as staff, or as patients with VD or smallpox in the military hospital. Buildings were added to the old quarantine station (built 1861-1873) and the old buildings renovated.

A guided walk of what was here in 1916: start from the end of the jetty. There is a map on the back.

In 1916, the ships/hulks were not on the island yet. The *Oreti* was built in 1900 and carried native timbers from Southland to Dunedin. The steel *Waikana* (1909) was taking regular passenger services along the bays from Dunedin to Portobello. In 1916 perhaps either ship could have been seen in the distance.



Quarantine Station buildings ca 1900. The main buildings are to the left, first hospital centre, and second hospital right. The cemetery is at the lower right (D De Maus)

Head up the path to the headland. The small stump of the old signalling flagpole can be seen to the right of the 'gate to nowhere' in the hedge. The NZ Marine Studies Centre cottage, on this side, and the fish hatchery would have been there (below the 1980's Marine Studies building).

The keeper, Will Dougall, his wife Hester and daughters Bell (16) and Madge (12) lived in the four-room keeper's cottage. The cottage is



Will and Hester Dougall in later years (ca 1926) (Bell Love)

still there within the 1920's extensions. Will had taken over from his mother and his father had been keeper since 1863. The Keeper's grounds were out of bounds to the soldiers in quarantine; likewise only Will could visit the soldiers.

Head up onto the lawn past the big macrocarpa trees to under the clothesline. Located where you stand was the first of the staff buildings, built as part of the first quarantine station in a clearing on the bush clad Island in 1861. Bunks would have been installed in the lower floor, and in the loft to accommodate staff.

This was the accommodation for up to 9 medical staff and 25 guards, assigned to the Island. Their role was to treat and cure the soldiers with VD, and to maintain military standards. Only an indentation remains.



Staff recreation hut and ablutions, 1861 Building behind tree (JE McEwan, ca 1950)

The cottage in front of you was extended in 1989-90 from the recreation hut built in 1915. Walk to the concrete tank below the cottage and look back up. The shape of the original building can still be seen.

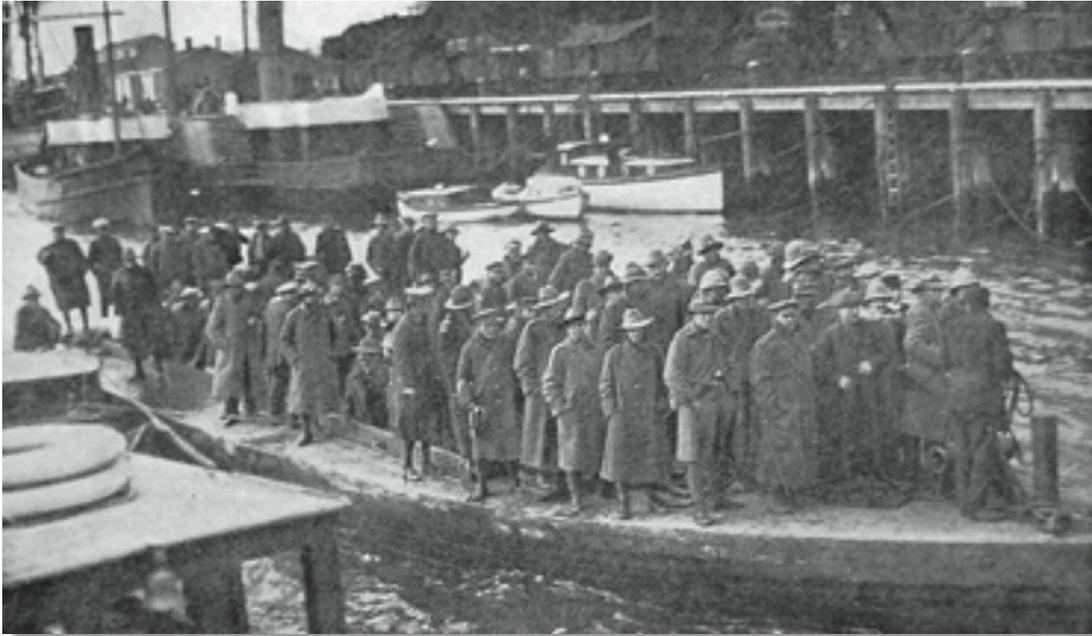
The concrete platform (now with tunnel house) is the remains of the WW1 latrines- urinals and toilets. The woolshed beyond was the ablutions block.

Head up to the site of the main quarantine station buildings. One part remains, the former Married Quarters. The four-bunk cubicles, built for families in quarantine, on both floors were retained for the ill soldiers in WW1.

There was some extension of the store-rooms behind the Married Quarters, but it was kept much the same. About sixty men were here at any one time. However, when the troopship *Willochra* returned in May 1916 with two cases of smallpox, all 231 men had to go into quarantine.



The troopship Willochra in dazzle camouflage 1918 (Te Papa).



Soldiers from the Willochra (Otago Witness, 7/6/1916)

The keeper's daughters were sent to board in town while the *Willochra* soldiers were here in 1916, and the existing soldiers with VD hastily sent to the old prison and barracks at Taiaroa head. One *Willochra* man died of smallpox and was buried at the cemetery in 1916 the last burial on the island. In 1947 his body was moved to the Andersons Bay Cemetery.

The upper floor of the Married Quarters was not removed until 10 years later (ca 1926) when dances, with a piano or gramophone, were held there.



Soldiers painting the Single Women's Quarters. Lace curtains had been whitewashed on the windows by the girls before the war, when they had the run of the Island. (Port Chalmers Maritime Museum).

Take the path up to the main hospital site. This was probably used to treat the soldiers, but the ablution block (now woolshed) might also have been used.

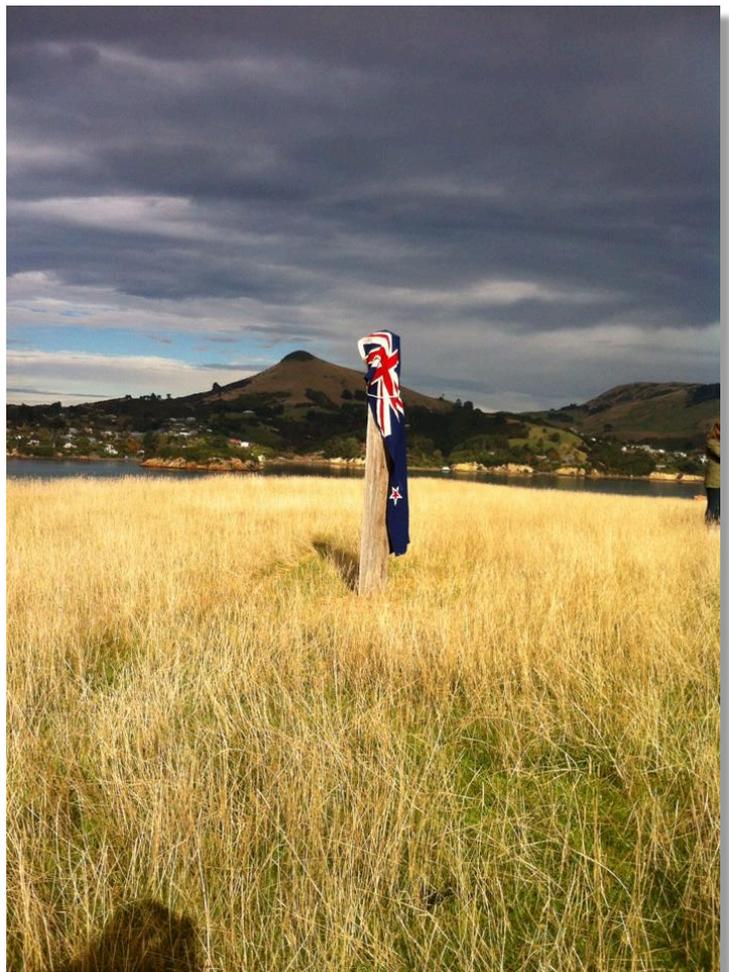
There were treatments for VD, although the 'magic bullet' (Salvarsan) drug treatment for syphilis, had only been discovered by Ehrlich in 1906.

After six weeks or more of treatment, the soldiers would be released for active duty. No other soldiers died here until the end of the war when the worldwide influenza epidemic swept through the station; most staff and patients fell ill. Three soldiers died of flu, but were buried on the mainland.

Go over the parade ground to the 'Soldiers Memorial' where a single post stands. The memorial was erected in 2015 by the QI/KT Community to remember the five New Zealand soldiers in France and Belgium who were court-martialled and executed in WW1, almost all for desertion in various forms.

Some were frequently in trouble; some were suffering from 'shell shock' (combat fatigue); some were not fully recovered from Gallipoli or injuries; and some were victims of indifference or dislike by their superior officers. Few were fairly represented at their courts martial.

The memorial is set near the edge of the roughly-levelled 'parade ground', still discernible, made by the soldiers quarantined 1915-19. As well as the post representing those to which the condemned men were bound, eight paving slabs represent the commanding officers and men in each firing squad. Four of the squads were forced to shoot their own men and were thus also victims. While these soldiers were pardoned by the NZ government in 2000, this is the first monument to these men in NZ.



Soldiers memorial before unveiling (A Terry, 2015)

This pamphlet was written by C Brown, B Maultby and L Hancock 2016 for the Quarantine Island /Kamau Taurua Community.

The Quarantine Island/ Kamau Taurua Community is a diverse group of people who love the Island. Most of us live in around Dunedin and come together to work and enjoy the Island on Open Weekends, usually the last weekend of the month.

Members care about the environmental, spiritual and social issues for the Island, having a deep commitment to care and sustainable management for the Island. The Community is welcoming to all who share a passion for the Island and encourages the wider community to get involved.

Key objectives of the Community:

- Conserving and enhancing the indigenous forest and wildlife, and using the Island's resources wisely.*
- Honouring the history of the Island, both Maori and European.*
- Welcoming overnight/day groups and individuals to experience this place, its magic and sense of sanctuary.*
- Offering monthly open weekends.*



