



KENNEDY PARK WWII BATTERY

**A Short History of the 63rd Battery, 9th Heavy
(Coastal) Regiment, R.N.Z.A.**

Kennedy Park World War II Installations Preservation Trust

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Cover Illustration : The Red Bluff battery in 2010

**KENNEDY PARK WORLD WAR II
INSTALLATIONS PRESERVATION
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PHOTO 14: The former Red Bluff recreation hut (139 Beach Rd., Castor Bay) currently owned by the Housing N.Z. Corporation (2010)



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MAP 1: Site location

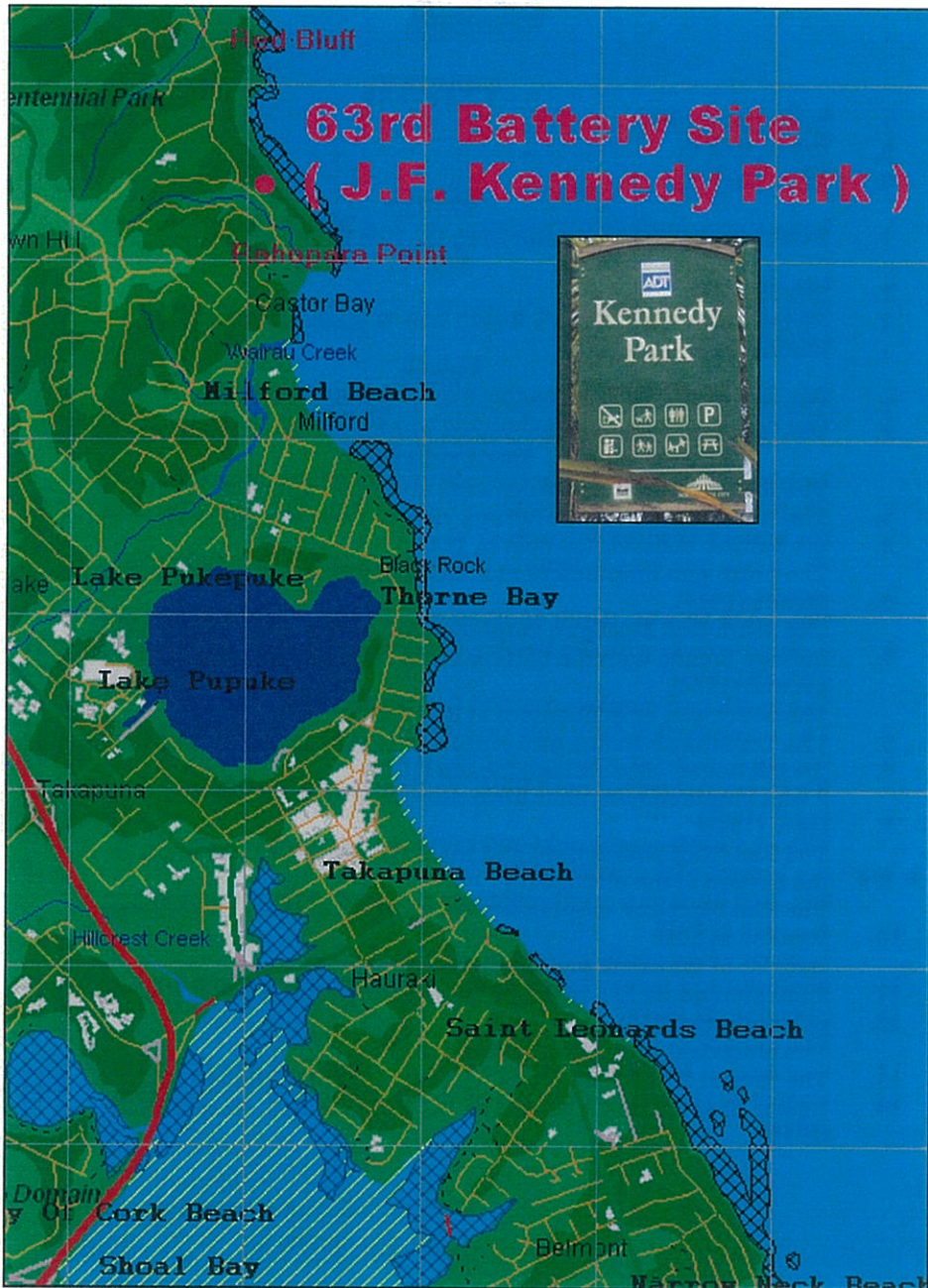


PHOTO 12 (Top): Shell storage niches in the passage connecting the gun emplacements (2010)

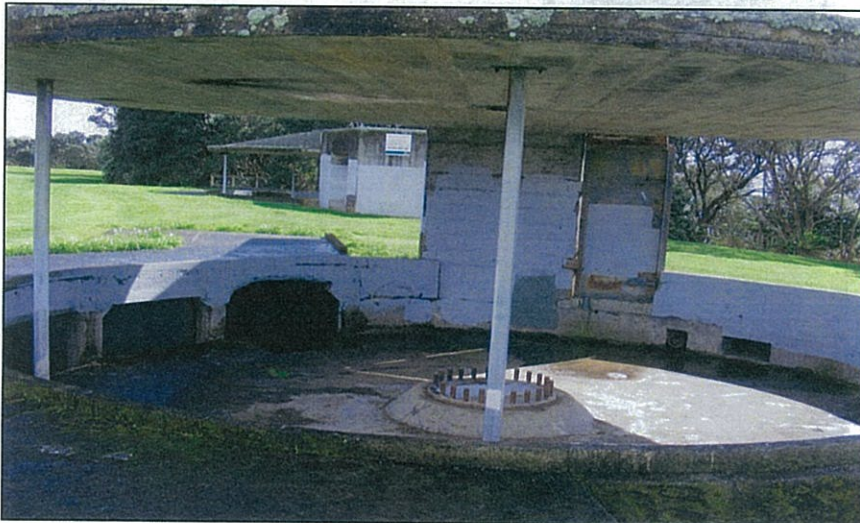
PHOTO 13 (Bottom): The electrical generator bunker (2010)





PHOTO 10 (Top): The Red Bluff gun emplacements stripped of their camouflage facades (2010)

PHOTO 11 (Bottom): Interior of the south gun emplacement (2010)



1. In the Beginning

As part of a five year modernization plan for the New Zealand Army in 1933 it was decided to update Auckland's coastal defences. To this end, and without a proper artillery survey, the land at Red Bluff above 'Castor Oil' Bay (i.e. part of DP8692, Allot. 190, Parish of Takapuna) was purchased on 20th January 1934. The Army intended to construct emplacements for two 6 inch Mk. VII guns on 45 degree counter-bombardment mounts at the site. However, the War Office in London, which at that time had responsibility for final approval of battery locations, rejected the site as unsuitable. The new battery was eventually located at Motutapu Island.

The Army did not occupy the Red Bluff site between 1934 and 1938 allowing an existing unregistered lease in favour of a 'dairyman' to continue a further three years from 1934.

2. World War II

With the outbreak of war in 1939 a small Army tent camp was established at Red Bluff.

During July—August 1940, H.M.S. Achilles was engaged in exercises to test Auckland's coastal defences which were found to be inadequate. Commodore Parry, commanding the New Zealand Squadron of the Royal Navy, offered eight 6 inch guns held in storage for a second armed merchant cruiser for coast artillery batteries. The Army accepted this offer.

Although considered unsuitable in 1934 the Army decided to locate two of these 6 inch guns at Red Bluff. This new battery was intended to serve, in conjunction with the 4 inch guns at Fort Takapuna (Narrow Neck) and North Head in Devonport, as a close defences battery covering the entrance to the Rangitoto Channel.

A hurried design, basically a simplified version of the 9.2 inch gun emplacements then under construction at Whangaparaoa, was drawn up. This design utilized the distinctive 'frying pan' gun emplacement cover. The Red Bluff battery was the first in New Zealand using this type of overhead protection. The battery complex was built by the

Public Works Department, with some difficulty, between April 1941 and May 1942 at the very considerable cost of 72,000 pounds. They were constructed as part of a massive nationwide programme of coastal defence works at that time.

The archival records indicate a considerable degree of indecision regarding both detail and general features of the battery's design, construction and layout. The magazines were originally designed to have 'burster slabs' as protection against shell hits, but these were abandoned. The usual magazine layout was not adhered to. Instead, niches in the walls of the passage connecting the gun emplacements appear to have been used for shell storage. As initially planned the battery observation post was to have been located, as at Whangaparaoa, between and behind the gun emplacements. It was finally built some distance to the north. Nevertheless, the concrete stairs intended to lead to this position were completed, and currently remain on the western side leading to 'nowhere'. The accommodation-service buildings were initially intended to occupy the flat land along the cliff. But this site would have required their demolition before the guns could fire on an enemy force landing on the beaches, and the Army directed that they should be built below the cliff level parallel with Beach Road.

The only battery structures visible on the skyline were the observation post and the gun emplacements. To disguise their military function these structures were provided with architecturally designed facades intended to resemble civilian houses, and to blend in with the surrounding residential area. The observation post was designed to look like a modernist style beach house or kiosk, and included a false wood and tile roof to hide the massive reinforced concrete roof of what was in reality a bunker. The gun emplacements received the same treatment with false roofs and chimneys concealing the frying pan protective gun emplacement cover. In addition, the accommodation-service buildings were planned to resemble a state housing estate. The effectiveness of this camouflage method was demonstrated in a letter from the Auckland Returned Services Association to the Prime Minister, Mr. Peter Fraser, during 1944. This letter complained about the Army's Castor Bay "seaside holiday homes" when there was a shortage of accommodation for soldiers invalided out of the service due to war wounds.

This 'deception' camouflage principle was widely practiced

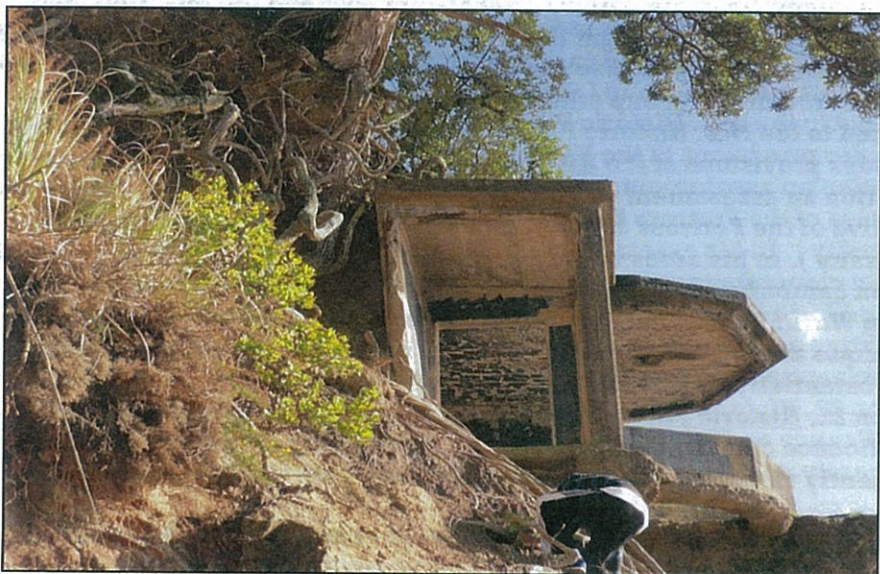


PHOTO 9 (Top): The Red Bluff battery observation post in a very dilapidated condition (1990)

PHOTO 10 (Bottom): The Red Bluff battery observation post as restored by North Shore City Council (2010)



PHOTOS. 8 (Top) & 9 (Bottom) : The Red Bluff battery searchlight (top) and machine-gun (bottom) emplacements at the bottom of the cliff (2010)



throughout New Zealand during World War II. Other known examples being located at Tomahawk Beach in Dunedin, and near Bluff. Mr. Frank Anderson, the architect responsible for construction of the Red Bluff battery buildings, recalled in 1995 that at the Seagrove Aerodrome on the Manukau harbour --

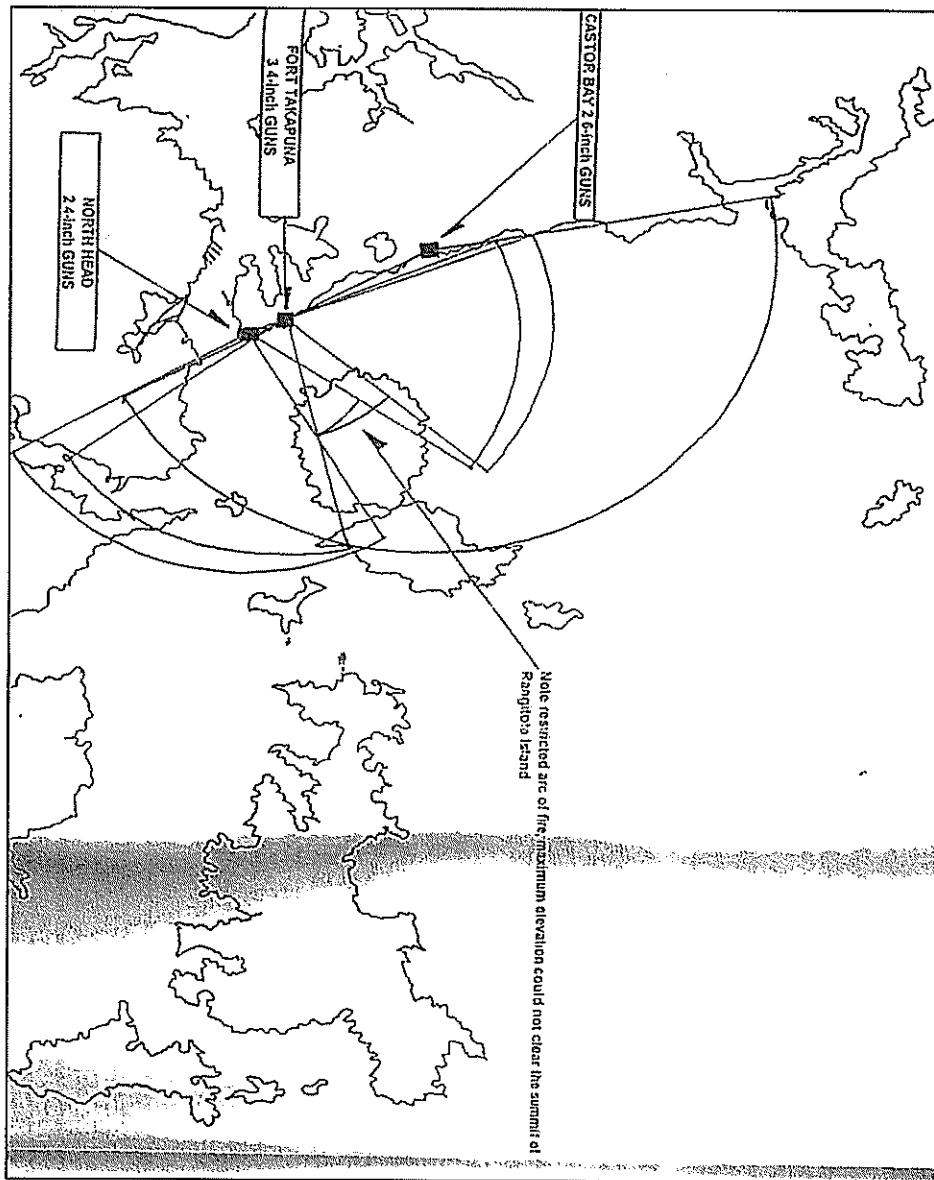
“ ... We deliberately drew attention to the mess building by making it look like a farm building, and painting it in red oxide ... I can remember making a store building masquerade as a small dairy factory”.

The Red Bluff battery was operational, by the time of the height in the panic over an anticipated Japanese invasion in 1942, as the 63rd Battery, 9th Heavy (Coastal) Regiment, R.N.Z.A. Due to allied victories in the Pacific towards the end of 1942 the battery was placed in reserve early in 1943, and was subsequently used as a transit station under Scheme B for military personnel being transferred to other branches of the armed forces. With a later decision to move

TABLE 1: Buildings originally comprising the Red Bluff battery complex c 1945

<i>Building No.</i>	<i>Particulars</i>
1—6	Men's Dormitories
7—10	W.A.A.C. Dormitories
11	Pump House
12	Men's Mess
13	Quartermaster & Ration Store
14	Senior N.C.O.'s Cubicles
15	Officer's & Sergeant's Mess
16	Officer's Cubicles
17	Orderly Room
18	Guard Room
19	Garage
20	Regimental Aid Post (Sick Bay)
21	Recreation Hut
22	Pump House
23	Workshop
24	Pump House
25	Battery Observation Post
26	Engine Room
27	Equipment Building
28	Latrine

MAP 2 : firing arcs of Auckland's World War II close defense coastal batteries



building, and the battery observation post (in a very dilapidated state) remained.

The condition of the battery observation post had, by this time, deteriorated to such an extent that it presented a public safety hazard, and the Council was forced to consider its demolition. To prevent its loss a Maori cultural group (the Ohomarangi Kaitiaki Taonga Trust) applied to the N.Z. Historic Places Trust for registration of the building under provisions of the Historic Places Act 1993. As part of this application an assessment was sought from Dr. J. Mitchell (N.Z. representative of the Fortress Study Group of Pembroke College, Oxford University). In his assessment Dr. Mitchell stated that this type of deception camouflage was extensively used in all theatres of conflict during World War II, but that the Red Bluff battery observation post was unique as the only example known to retain its camouflage façade substantially intact. The building was registered in Category II (Section 22, Historic Places Act 1993) a historic building of regional significance on 25th August 1995. The North Shore City Council subsequently withdrew its decision to demolish the building.

During 1998 the Bays Rover Crew Trust raised funds and commissioned Dave Pearson Architects Ltd. to compile a heritage assessment to promote the restoration of the battery observation post.

North Shore City Council conducted works to restore the structural integrity of the gun emplacements 'frying pan' covers during 2000. Salmond Architects provided management for these works.

Between 2002 and 2003 the Council undertook a project in two stages to restore the battery observation post so that it retained the elements of both its military and later civilian historical uses. The project was funded by North Shore City Council and the Lotteries Grants Board. Management being undertaken by Council property projects manager Tony Butler in consultation with Dave Pearson Architects Ltd. The observation post continues to retain its unique camouflage façade, and to serve the community as a popular 'public use' building.

The community's interest in the continued existence of the 63rd Battery structures at J.F. Kennedy Park was reflected during 2010 in the registration of the Kennedy Park World War II Installations Preservation Trust Inc. The Trust's principle objectives are the preservation and restoration of the battery buildings as a public museum.

the examination anchorage for searching ships entering the Auckland harbour north of Rangitoto Island the Red Bluff battery was used to cover it.

3. After the War

Following the end of the war in 1945 the Red Bluff battery remained in reserve, but was mainly used as an Army supply depot. From 1948 it was also used for the Compulsory Military Training (C.M.T.) scheme. During 1952 the 6 inch guns were fired for the last time, and were replaced by 3.7 inch anti-aircraft guns which were fired for the first time in February 1953. The final C.M.T. camp was held at Red Bluff in 1956, and the battery observation post was converted for residential use around the same time. During 1957 the Red Bluff battery was decommissioned as an operational reserve unit as part of the general decommissioning of coast artillery batteries at this time. The battery buildings continued to serve as an Army supply depot until 1964.

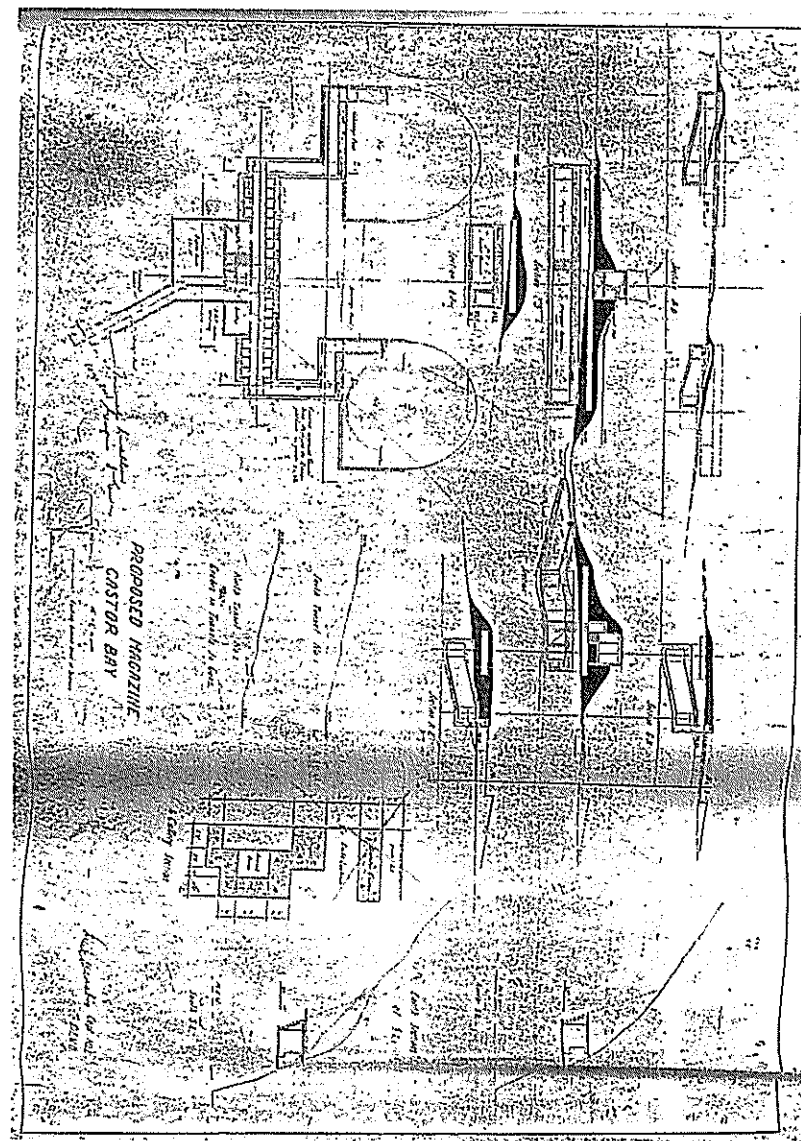
In 1956 part of the site (i.e. DP34612, Lot 16) including the present reserve connecting J.F. Kennedy Park and the Rahopara Historic Reserve was transferred to the Takapuna City Council as an esplanade reserve. And, during 1957 an additional part of the site bordering Beach Road (including the accommodation-service buildings) was set aside for state housing purposes. The N.Z. State Advances Corporation subsequently converted these buildings for their new civilian use.

As the Takapuna City Council could not expend reserve account funding maintaining the area unless the land was vested in the Council the remaining land was so vested in 1966.

During the early 1990's most of the part of the former battery site that had been set aside for state housing in 1956 was purchased by the North Shore City Council, and the majority of the former accommodation-service buildings were demolished.

By 1995 only the searchlight emplacements at the bottom of the cliff, the officer's quarters at the southern end of the site, the gun emplacements (stripped of their camouflage facades), and the former recreation

PLAN 1: The Red Bluff gun emplacements 'as designed' (1941)



PLAN 2: The Red Bluff gun emplacements and buildings 'as built' (1945)

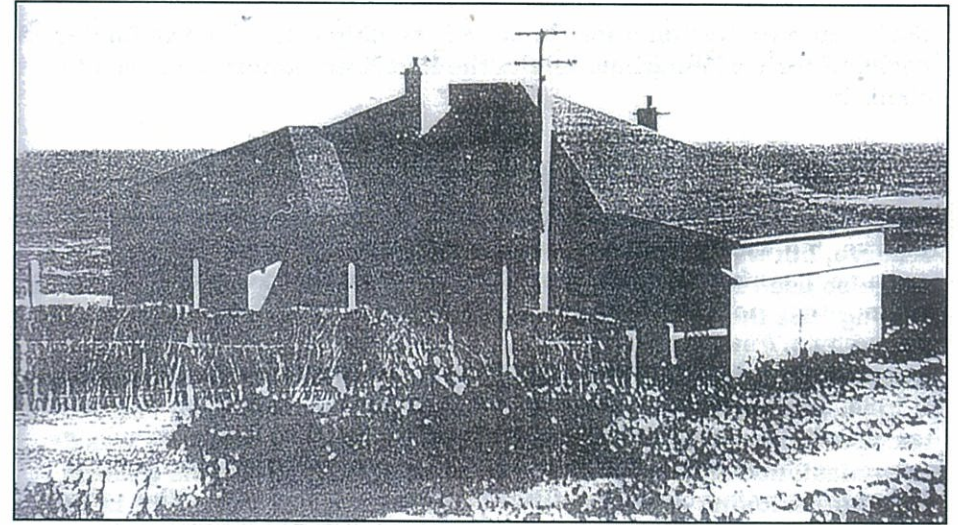
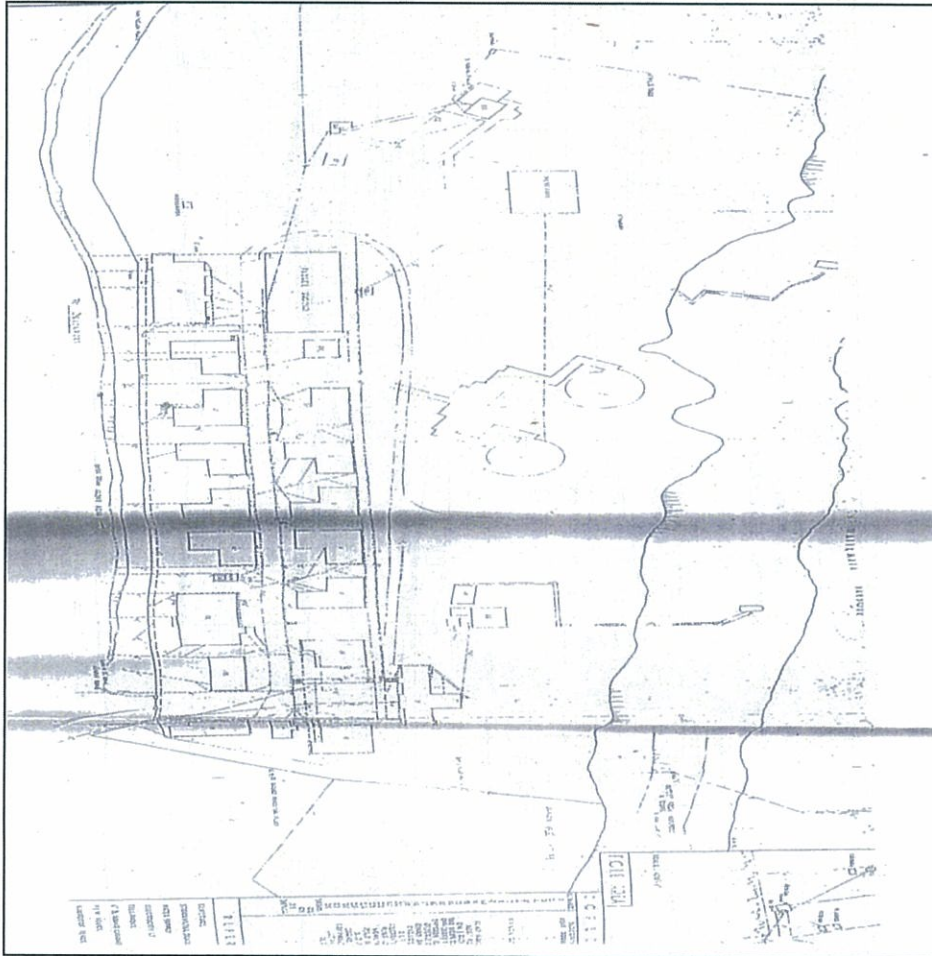


PHOTO 6 (Top): The Tomahawk Beach gun emplacement in Dunedin clad in its 'beach house' camouflage façade (1943)

PHOTO 7 (Bottom): A gun emplacement near Bluff disguised as a 'seaside cottage' (1943)



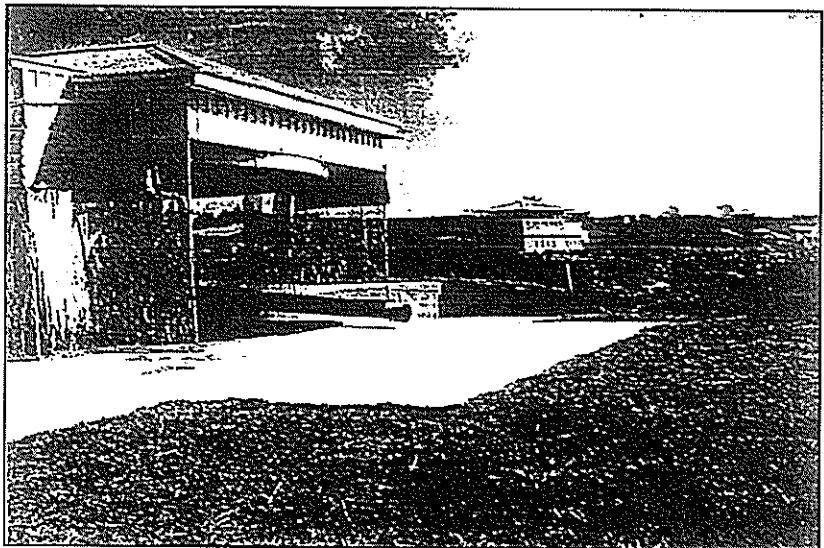


PHOTO 4 (Top): The south gun emplacement showing its 'state house' camouflage façade with the battery observation post in the background (1944)

PHOTO 5 (Bottom): The south gun emplacement (1944)

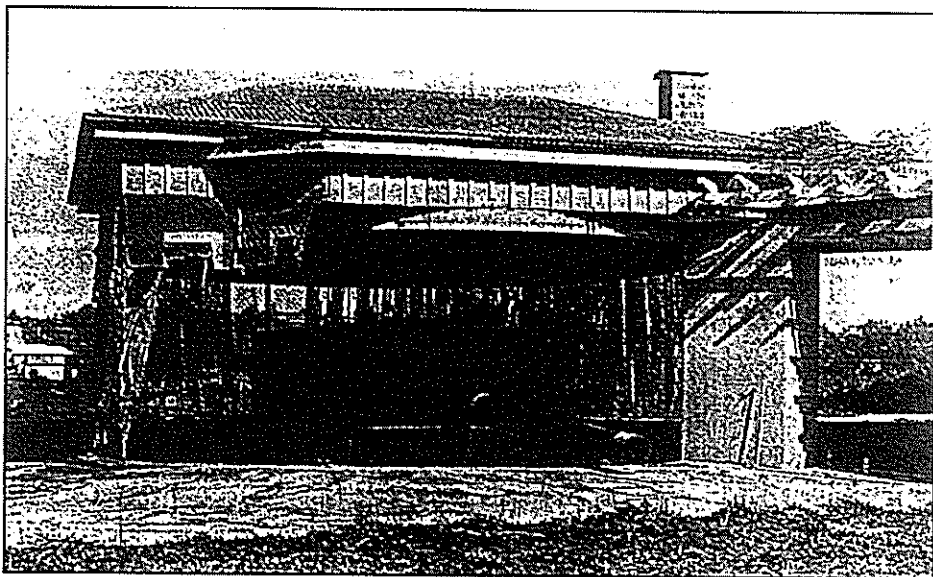


PHOTO 1: The Red Bluff gun emplacements under construction in 1941

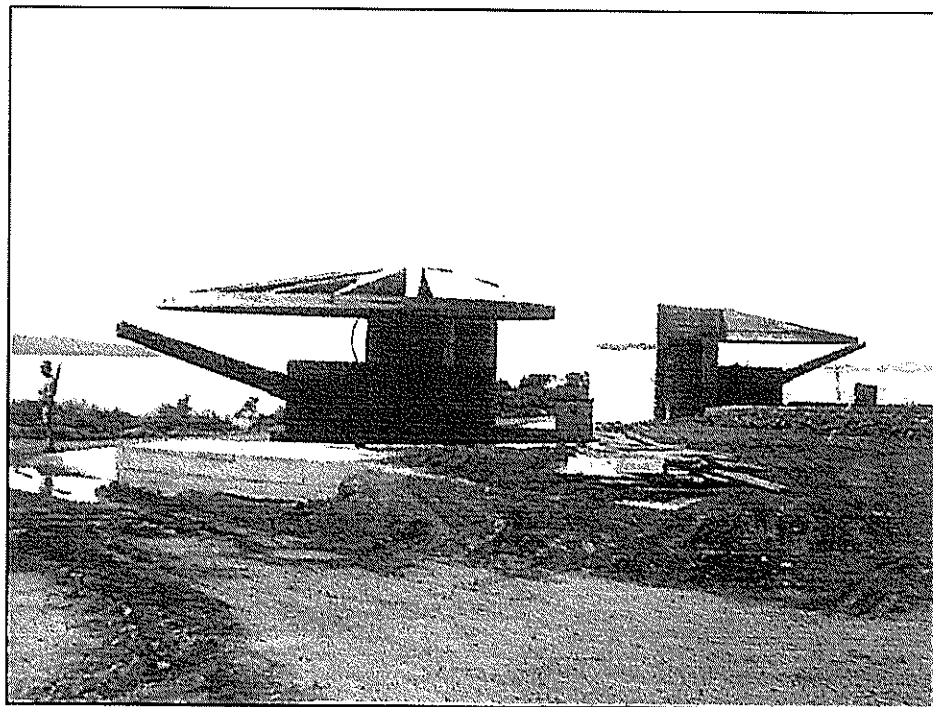


PHOTO 2: The Red Bluff battery buildings viewed from the upper story of the battery observation post in 1944. The water reservoir disguised as a tennis court can be seen in the foreground, the gun emplacements in their civilian house facades in the left background, and the accommodation-service buildings to the right (middle of background)

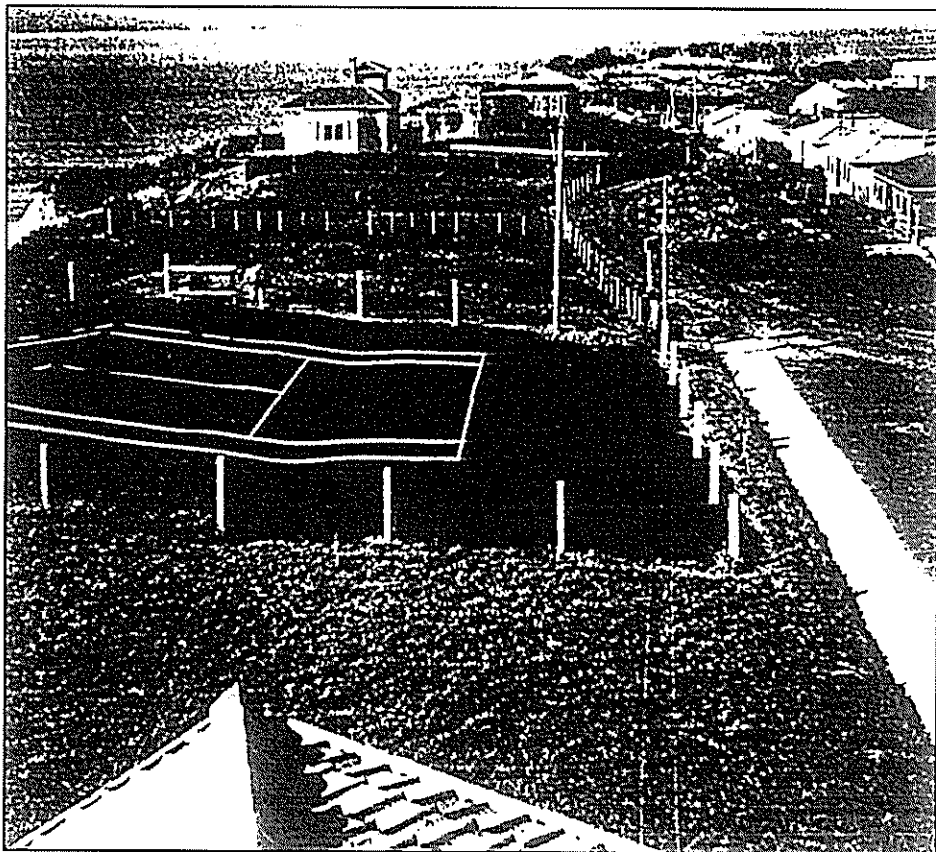


PHOTO 3: The north gun emplacement in its 'beach house' façade (1944)

