

The White Heart of Tapawera by Maurice Taylor

I have been instrumental in re-creating the long lost Regimental Emblem of the Nelson Marlborough & West Coast Regiment in Tapawera, largely as it was the training ground & camp sites of these soldiers since 1900. The original badge was destroyed by a road construction. As a member of the Tapawera Historical society I sought and was granted the go ahead to take on this project. I sought materials and obviously researched the records as to quite where it was and how big and not least what the interpreted adaption of the Regimental Badge looked like in white washed rocks. To ensure all were happy and to get something up on the hillside, which would highlight and serve as a pattern, I scrounged MDF boards and cut out a 26 foot diameter ring below a crown some 9 ft. x 5 ft. with a Stag Passant nearly filling the circle. I cut out the ring in the school workshop during the Christmas break and made several crowns before I got a decent photo to copy and cut out the stag in the local Scout den. Then I had it taken to the site and erected it bit by bit until we replace the facsimile thus created with natural white stones. For which the Terriers have offered men and a truck and we have some tons of stone close to the site, though it is some 80 yards higher up the hill than the original. The RSA are pleased as are the Terriers as it is after all entirely in their honour. It has cost to date, complete with story board by the main road so all can understand what it means, the princely sum of \$31.30. Which I think has really pushed the Ernest Rutherford observation "We don't have the money, so we must think". Though struggling to hold on let alone work on the 45 degree slope in the full heat of a dry summer proved difficult it has had very positive response and can be seen for miles away the "The Chalk Horse of Tapawera", only its a stag. This site has the potential to host periodic re-enactments much like the Air Shows that are so popular . And the grand opening once the permanent white stones are in place combined perhaps with the WW1 Anniversary events will hopefully be a test event. I am principally indebted to former CO Noruha Katua for the following brief history: The Badge was a combination of the 12th & 13th (Marlborough) Regiments; a stag passant contained within a circlet inscribed with the Regt motto "Kia Pono Tonu" (meaning not known to me) over the numerals 12 & X111. Although the badge was adopted it was not struck until 1951. The 12th Nelson Regiment came into being 17th March 1911, CO Lt Col W H Bryant VD (Volunteer Defence long service) A Coy previously Stoke Rifles F Coy 1st Westland, Hokitika B Coy previously Blenheim Rifles G Coy Greymouth C Coy previously Wiamea Rifles H Coy Denniston D Coy previously Nelson I Coy Reefton E Coy Waihi J Coy Millerton West Coast Companies Transferred to 13th N Canterbury Regt in 1912 Last Camps as Volunteers disbanded 1st Nov 1911 Grand ball with Garrison band who come up by rail went all night with racing the next day to use up the 65 or so pounds of Regimental funds, very fitting and the Hall still stands to this day . 1912 The 12th Nelson, 120 men (mounted infantry) camp at Spring Creek (Blenheim) the rest (infantry) at Tapawera. 1913 12th Nelson Camped at Kowhai. 1914 Full Regiment at Tapawera. 1915 to 1918 camps held but not recorded. 1917 name change to Nelson & Marlborough. 1919 to 1921 little activity in Territorials The Regt was 2 Canterbury Bn. 1922 no camps held. 1 June 1923 2 Canterbury became Nelson Marlborough & West Coast Regt. 1924 Annual camp at Appleby (Nr Nelson). 1925 no camp. 1926 -1930 Annual camps at Tapawera. 10 March 1928 Colours were consecrated and presented to the Regt after Annual camp, Stag place on hillside about this period. 1931 no camps. 1932 to 1936 Tapawera Camps. 1937 Fairhall Camp (?). 1940 Tapawera. May 1943 colours placed in Nelson Cathedral for safe keeping (still there). The camp in May 1914 went over a two week period and comprised 1,240 men of all ranks, 641 ordinary ranks, 246 mounted rifles and 64 Gunners of H battery with 17 Officers plus Cooks, Medics, Engineers, Farriers and two ministers who appear to be civilians. Artillery would seem to be 15 pounders, two batteries of four guns each; one recovered Shell was of iron and engraved 1900.