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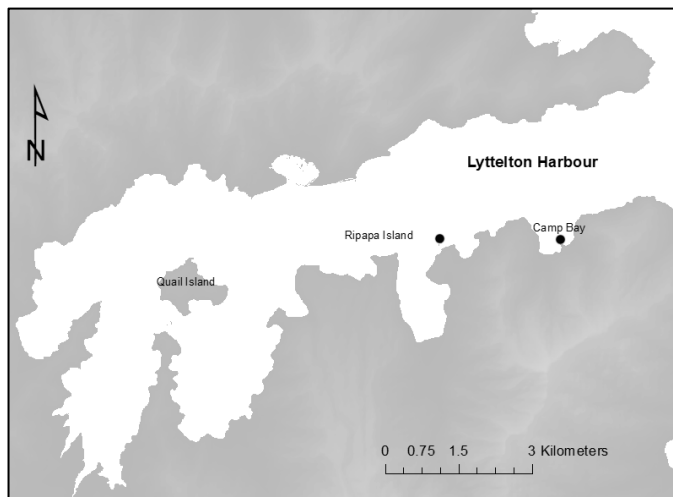
## **Third Time's the Charm: An Investigation into the Quarantine Landscape of Lyttelton Harbour**

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### **Introduction**

The development of quarantine regulations in New Zealand first began in the early 1840s following the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi and subsequent influx of European immigrants. The cramped and unhygienic conditions of immigrant ships proved to be the perfect breeding ground for disease. Initially, shipboard isolation was the method employed to prevent outbreaks of disease, however, following the increase in immigrant numbers and poor onboard facilities, the need for a permanent quarantine station became increasingly apparent. By the 1870s, each of the main centres of New Zealand had an established quarantine station that typically consisted of barracks divided by gender and marital status, a hospital, and a dining hall with kitchen facilities. Although in some cases smaller temporary quarantine facilities were erected on the mainland, the majority of permanent quarantine stations were established on large islands in the harbours of New Zealand's major centres. These islands provided a suitable geographically bound means of quarantine, which proved successful for the early European townships of New Zealand. However, despite the important role of quarantine stations in the European settlement of New Zealand, investigation into their history and associated archaeology has been limited.

While most New Zealand centres had a single quarantine station established in their harbour (Quarantine Island/Kamau Taurua, Dunedin, 1861; Somes Island/Matiu, Wellington, 1869; Motuihe Island, Auckland, 1972), Canterbury's Lyttelton Harbour had three different stations over the course of its history. Camp Bay quarantine station, established in 1863, was Canterbury's first official quarantine station, followed by Ripapa Island in 1973, and Quail Island (Ōtamahua) in 1875 (Figure 1). It is the intention of this article to discuss the history of each of the Canterbury quarantine stations, their associated archaeology, and the subsequent development of the quarantine landscape in Lyttelton Harbour.



*Figure 1. Locations of Lyttelton Harbour quarantine stations.*

## **Camp Bay**

In 1863, over a decade after the founding of the Canterbury settlement, the Camp Bay quarantine station was established. Located on the southern side of the harbour between Purau and Little Port Cooper (Figure 1), it was the second permanent station to be established in New Zealand (Kelly 2017: 65). Initially the quarantine station and immigration barracks consisted of a series of tents on the headland above Camp Bay, before the local government allocated roughly four thousand pounds for the erection of several buildings (Stapylton-Smith 1990: 41). Nine buildings were constructed, including a single men's quarters, a single women's quarters, female and male infirmaries, two buildings for married couples, a barracks master's house and store, two kitchens, and washrooms; although the water closets were left out of the design (Stapylton-Smith 2009: 22). Unfortunately, the government's focus on economic savings saw the buildings founded without the consultation of an architect or engineer, and despite warnings of their decay from the barracks master, the buildings collapsed in a gale during the winter of 1865 (*The Press* 7 July 1865, 2). Despite this people were still quarantined in the area when necessary prior to the establishment of a new station on Ripapa Island in 1873 (Stapylton-Smith 2009: 23). The conditions were considered 'primitive' and this paired with infectious disease resulted in a high death toll and the subsequent establishment of a cemetery on the headland above the bay (Scotter 1968: 42).

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Another major problem for the station was its location. As it was situated on the mainland, enforcing quarantine proved to be problematic. Individuals were easily able to abscond, risking the spread of disease, or plunder local stores with impunity. In one case several people placed under quarantine stole four cases of beer and two cases of whiskey from the nearby Purau pub, no doubt making for a cheerful evening in otherwise unfortunate circumstances (Stapylton-Smith 2009: 22). Incidents such as these were influential in the relocation of Canterbury's quarantine station to nearby Ripapa Island.

Currently all that remains of the quarantine station are the building platforms and cemetery (site N36/117). The building platforms are located in a private paddock and are visible in aerial imagery (Figure 2). The cemetery, located on the headland, is believed to have had up to 74 interments and was originally fenced with individual grave markers (Figure 2) (Stapylton-Smith 2009: 24). However, the fence and markers have not survived, and the undulating ground are all that indicates its existence today. To date no archaeological excavation of the former quarantine station has occurred and investigation into the site itself is limited.



*Figure 2. Location of Camp Bay quarantine station with historic terraces in the centre (circled) and the cemetery on the headland.*

## **Ripapa Island**

Following the failure of the Camp Bay station, the provincial government decided to relocate the quarantine facilities to nearby Ripapa Island (site N36/3) near the entrance to Purau Bay (Figure 1). Ripapa Island had previously been used by Ngāti Mamoe before being taken over by Ngāi Tahu and developed into a major pā designed for musket warfare (Navy League of New Zealand 1986: 3). However, the pā was sacked during the 1820s following an inter-tribal feud and the island wasn't used again until 1873 when the quarantine station was established there (Navy League of New Zealand 1986: 4). A total of ten buildings were erected on the island including a wooden two-storeyed hospital with separate wards for men and women, accommodations for families, single men, and single women, a caretaker's quarters, washrooms, and a kitchen and dining area (*The Press* 6 June 1873: 3). These facilities proved to be more structurally sound and elaborate than their predecessors at Camp Bay, however, they were not free from problems. The station had been designed to house up to 300 people, but Ripapa Island's small size led to cramped and often overcrowded conditions (*The Press* 6 June 1873: 3). Additionally, Ripapa Island's proximity to the mainland again made absconding from quarantine easy for isolated individuals. Subsequently a third quarantine station was established in Lyttelton Harbour on Quail Island/ Ōtamahua in 1875.



*Figure 3. Fort Jervois/Ripapa Island (Kevin Jones  
<https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/photo/fort-jervois>).*

Despite the establishment of Quail Island's quarantine station in 1875, Ripapa Island continued to be an official quarantine station until 1885 when the island

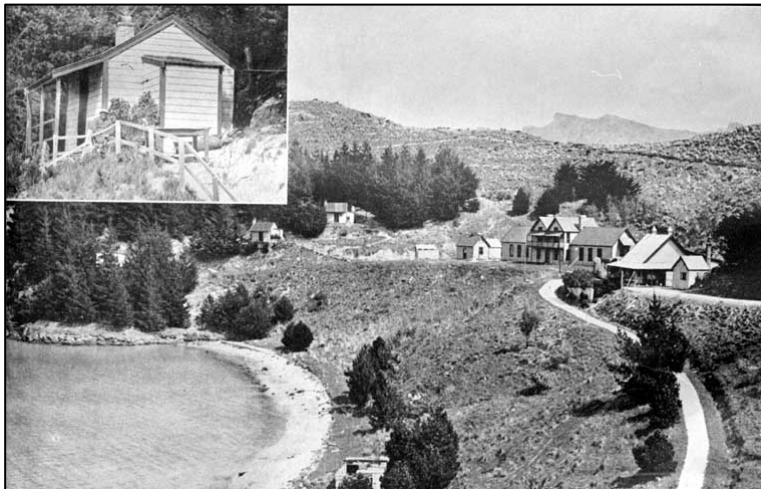
was repurposed as a ‘Russian Scare’ fort. Subsequently, the quarantine buildings were taken down and re-erected at the Quail Island, leaving little surface evidence of the station’s existence (Kelly 2017: 24). Fort Jervois (site N36/3) was a key part of New Zealand’s elaborate coastal defence systems of the 1880s, of which other quarantine islands are included (Figure 3). Fort Jervois has ornate mason works, four disappearing guns (site N36/119), and is one of the best examples of a ‘Russian Scare’ defences in New Zealand. The island’s military uses continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century and in 1913, the island was used to house defaulters from compulsory military service (Navy League of New Zealand 1986: 5). During World War One, it served as a defence post and held German prisoners of war, Lieutenant Kircheiss and Count Felix von Luckner, who had also been held in Auckland at Motuihe Island (Navy League of New Zealand 1986: 5). The island’s defences were again used during World War Two and have been managed by the Navy League of New Zealand since 1958 (Navy League of New Zealand 1986: 5). It is listed as a Category One Historic Place (List No. 5306), although it is currently inaccessible due to earthquake risk. Despite the interesting history of Ripapa Island archaeological investigation into this site is limited.

## **Quail Island**

Quail Island, located in the heart of Lyttelton Harbour, was first used by Europeans in the 1850s when it was managed as pastoral farmland (Figure 1). A building terrace (site M36/121) where the farmers cottage once stood and several quarry sites date to this period of the islands history. However, Quail Island is best known for its use as a quarantine station and a large quantity of archaeological evidence on the island relate to this era. The quarantine station was built in 1874 on the south side of the island and officially proclaimed as a quarantine station in February 1875 (Jackson 1990: 39). The new quarantine buildings were considered ‘handsome’ and were wooden, lined with Baltic timber, and roofed with galvanised iron (Figure 4) (*The Press* 9 October 1874: 3). The station included two large wards, barracks divided by gender and marital status, a large day room, and kitchen and dining facilities, designed to cater to 200 people (*The Press* 9 October 1874: 3). The single men’s quarters (site M36/131) is one of two surviving 19<sup>th</sup> century quarantine buildings in New Zealand and is a Category One Historic site (List No. 7408). It is a single storeyed rectangular building with gabled ends and ship-lap weatherboarding (Figure 4). Other archaeological evidence such as foundations, levelled areas, water tank stands, tracks, and drains are indicative of the extent of the quarantine station at its peak.



*Figure 4. Single Men's Quarantine Barracks Quail Island (Gavin McLean <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/photo/quail-island> ).*



*Figure 5. Quail Island Quarantine Station 1911. The building on far right is the caretakers residence and the two-storeyed structure is the hospital. Buildings on the left and in the inset are leper huts.  
(Christchurch City Libraries: CCL PhotoCD 2, IMG0090)*

From the 1880s onwards, the need for quarantine declined due to the increase in steamships and improvements made to hygiene standards onboard (Kelly 2017: 60). Therefore, throughout its use as a quarantine station, Quail Island was more

commonly used by those already in New Zealand who were ill, than by those immigrating (Jackson 1990: 40). In December 1879, 102 children from the Lyttelton orphanage were housed on the island due to an outbreak of diphtheria (*The Press* 13 December 1879: 2). An additional outbreak saw them quarantined for a second time in May 1880 (*Globe* 20 May 1880: 3). In 1907, New Zealand's only leper colony was established on the southwestern side of Quail Island. A series of leper huts were erected and by 1924 there were nine leprosy patients living on the island (Trotter and McCulloch 2004: 1). The huts were modest units for individual patients and were constructed under the same architectural style as the other quarantine buildings (Figure 5). In 1925, the remaining patients were transferred to another leper colony in Fiji and the buildings were taken down a few years later (Trotter and McCulloch 2004: 1). The building platforms of the leper huts (site M36/130) and a burial site (site M36/155) associated with the leper colony are all that remains from this period. In 2002, an archaeological investigation into one of the leper hut sites was conducted (Trotter and McCulloch 2004: 2). The excavation revealed the footprint of the small building and recovered a range of historical artefacts (Trotter and McCulloch 2004). Additionally, in 2015 the leper grave was excavated due to slumping threats to the site with the intention of exhuming buried individuals for re-interment at a nearby location (Briden 2015: 1). However, the excavation did not result in the recovery of any skeletal remains (Briden 2015: 11).

Due to the establishment of the leper colony, Quail Island was not used by the military during World War One, as almost all other quarantine stations in New Zealand were; however, was used extensively during the Spanish Influenza epidemic of 1918 (Kelly 2017: 66). The Quail Island quarantine station was officially closed in 1925 following the relocation of leprosy patients and is currently an historic and recreation reserve.

## **Discussion**

The quarantine stations of Lyttelton Harbour followed a similar building pattern, having a barracks master's house, a hospital or convalescent unit, and barracks divided by marital status and gender, highlighting an expression of Victorian morality. At Camp Bay the building platforms are the only visible surface evidence of these buildings, and although indicative of the size and extent of the station, are yet to be further investigated archaeologically. The physical evidence of the quarantine station at Ripapa Island is further limited due to the removal and reestablishment of buildings on Quail Island. Therefore, any potential quarantine related evidence is likely to be subsurface. However, Ripapa Island is archaeologically representative of a different 19<sup>th</sup> century threat; Russian invasion. Fort Jervis is one of the best examples of 'Russian Scare' defences and



architecture in New Zealand. The site's extensive mason works, and sophisticated weaponry are key archaeological evidence of New Zealand's military past. Lastly, the archaeological evidence of Quail Island's quarantine station is both more extensive and more thoroughly investigated. The single men's quarters, being the sole surviving historic quarantine barracks in Lyttelton Harbour, is an important site for understanding the architecture of historic quarantine buildings and is representative of the systematic colonisation of New Zealand by Europeans during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Additionally, the excavations conducted at the site of New Zealand's only leper colony add to our knowledge of both the historic management of infectious disease and the living conditions and treatment of infected individuals.

## **Conclusions**

The establishment and use of quarantine stations in Lyttelton harbour was imperative for the successful founding of the Canterbury settlement. These locations allowed the provincial government to manage the threat of infectious disease on immigrant ships, as well as provide an isolated facility to treat local outbreaks. However, the frugality of the local government saw the first quarantine station at Camp Bay fail disastrously, and the size and location of the second station at Ripapa Island also proved to be inadequate. It was not until the establishment of the third and final quarantine station at Quail Island in 1875 that a wholly suitable facility was founded.

To date there has been limited archaeological research conducted on the quarantine stations of Lyttelton Harbour, and those in the wider context of New Zealand. Investigating these locations and understanding early immigration processes is important for developing our knowledge of early European settler society within New Zealand and the historic uses of these strategic landscapes.

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