

Pietermaritzburg's Imperial Postscript: Fort Napier from 1910 to 1925

Introduction

For 71 of the 150 years of Pietermaritzburg's recorded history, Fort Napier and its imperial garrison was one of the most significant institutions in the city and indeed in the whole colony.¹ A.F. Hattersley, and many other writers following in his footsteps, have described the history of the garrison with a heavy emphasis on the social, sporting and cultural activities of the officer corps in the life of the colonial elite during the heyday of Victorian Natal.² The role of the garrison during its twilight years, particularly during the period between the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 and the departure of the imperial troops at the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 has been seriously neglected and there has been little discussion of the subsequent fate of Fort Napier.

Natal was no longer a separate colony within the British Empire and Pietermaritzburg was no longer a colonial capital. English-speaking white Natalians felt threatened in a largely Afrikaner-dominated South Africa. Pietermaritzburg, in particular, suffered a loss of status and an economic decline. Political power and bureaucratic activity were slipping away to Pretoria and this resulted in some suspicion towards the central government and a clinging to the imperial past.³ One of the most important factors in providing a sense of continuity with the past and an imperial link in the present was the continued presence of a British regiment in garrison at Fort Napier.

The withdrawal of the garrison: 1910–1914

The creation of a unified South African state in 1910 meant that the imperial government could at last realize its long-cherished objective of making the whites of South Africa defend themselves. Moves to co-ordinate the defence of the four colonies had been made as early as 1907 and after Union they came to fruition in 1912 when the Defence Act was passed.⁴ From the moment of Union on 31 May 1910 the withdrawal of the British garrison from Fort Napier was simply a matter of time. The Pietermaritzburg City Council had early warning of impending changes in April 1910 when the Town Clerk received a letter from the Officer Commanding the Royal Engineers in South Africa objecting to the payment of a fixed charge of £500 per annum for five years for sewage removal from Fort Napier on the grounds that by the end of that

period the barracks would be likely to contain ‘... only a few details or caretakers’.⁵ Between 1909 and 1913 Fort Napier was garrisoned by the 1st Battalion of the Wiltshire Regiment under the command of Lt.-Col. L.N. Warden. The regiment, as its garrison predecessors had done since 1845, played a prominent part in the social life of the city. The regimental band performed in Alexandra Park, the drums beat the ‘Retreat’ for the public and regimental sports and ‘other entertainments’, in the words of the Deputy Mayor, Clr Hugh Parker, ‘greatly contributed towards the pleasure and amusement of the citizens’.⁶

At a superficial level these activities of the Wiltshire Regiment can be regarded simply as social amusements intended harmlessly to occupy bored troops and amuse pleasure-seeking civilians. On the other hand, as Denis Schaffer has pointed out, Martin West used the theatrical and social talents of the 45th Regiment in an effort to woo the Voortrekkers in 1845 and gain their support for the new colonial administration in Natal.⁷ Thirty years later, Sir Garnet Wolseley used his coterie of staff officers and the brass band of the garrison to dazzle and overawe colonial legislators into passing a new colonial constitution.⁸

The City Council of Pietermaritzburg was clearly following well-established precedent when it paraded the officers and men of the 1st Wiltshire Regiment in bandstands, on sports fields and around town at every available opportunity to counteract local fears. Even the rowdiness of the troops in the city’s bars and houses of lesser repute was accepted in good humour by most of the townspeople, particularly, of course, by those in the liquor trade. ‘The Tommies’, reminisced the old timers, ‘kept the town alive’.⁹

By the time that the Wiltshire Regiment was replaced by the 1st Battalion of the South Staffordshire Regiment, considerable changes in the status and duties of the imperial garrison had occurred. The Union Defence Act of 1912



The city centre on 1 June 1914. Note the garrison NCO watching the motorcyclist (Mr B. Adams) racing down Commercial Road.

(Photograph: Natal Museum)

had established a South African military force responsible for what would now be called 'national security'. The allocation of duties to the Union Defence Force clearly illustrates the nature of South Africa as a 'conquest' state: the permanent force consisted of five regiments of the South African Mounted Rifles which were given both military and police duties.¹⁰

The imperial garrisons were controlled from Pretoria and the troops stationed at outposts such as Fort Napier were allocated duties or sent on manoeuvres according to priorities decided upon by the General Officer Commanding at Roberts Heights (now Voortrekkerhoogte). Locally this affected the 'Knots', as the South Staffordshire Regiment was nicknamed, who were not able to provide as many band performances in Pietermaritzburg as the Wiltshire Regiment had done, because their bandsmen were detached on duty elsewhere for much of 1913.¹¹

As war clouds gathered over Europe in July 1914 the 'Knots' set off from Pietermaritzburg on 17 July for the annual manoeuvres near Potchefstroom.¹² Only administrative and auxiliary troops were left at Fort Napier to use this locally quiet period by enjoying outings to the Howick Falls.¹³ The looming crisis necessitated the cancellation of the Potchefstroom manoeuvres and the South Staffordshire Regiment returned to Pietermaritzburg on Thursday, 6 August, infected with 'war-fever' and ready to 'fight anywhere and everywhere', according to the newspaper columnist 'Pipeclay'.¹⁴

The following week saw frantic activity in Pietermaritzburg as the garrison prepared itself for imminent conflict. On Friday, 7 August, the troops were granted leave and the Saturday edition of the *Natal Witness* coyly reported that the 'men of the garrison were prominent in the city' the previous night.¹⁵ On the following Monday the garrison commander, Lt.-Col. R.M. Ovens, stated that the regiment was preparing to move and the press added that the officers and men were beginning to sell their possessions. Queues of troops formed at the General Post Office as soldiers withdrew their savings from the Government Savings Bank and the city began to feel the first economic effects of the withdrawal of the garrison.¹⁶ Meanwhile crowds gathered outside the offices of the *Natal Witness* for the latest war news or in the Market Square to listen to patriotic speeches and to the band of the Natal Carbineers play rousing music.¹⁷

Organizations which were closely associated with the garrison began holding farewell functions. On the evening of Monday, 10 August, the Good Templars met at the 'Peace and Harmony' lodge and passed a resolution thanking Lt.-Col. Ovens for his support for the 'Temperance and Good Templary cause'. Ovens was described as the 'finest champion' that the cause had ever had in the Pietermaritzburg garrison.¹⁸ Alan Skelley attributes the widespread drunkenness in the British army to a lack of basic amenities and illustrates the attempts of evangelical religious movements to wean soldiers off alcohol, provide them with alternative recreation and offer them psychosociological support.¹⁹

On the evening of Wednesday, 12 August 1914, a huge patriotic meeting was held at the City Hall and addressed by Natal notables such as the Provincial Administrator, Charles Smythe, and P.H. Taylor, the Mayor of Pietermaritzburg. Before the meeting began the band of the South Staffordshire Regiment, dressed in service khaki and not in scarlet, beat the 'Retreat' in front of the City Hall to add to the crowd's patriotic fervour.

The following morning's edition of the *Natal Witness*, with a front page

scarred with the black bars of military censorship, mourned the end of the 'Retreat' ceremonies and the imminent departure of the garrison.²⁰

On Thursday, 13 August, the furniture and effects of officers and men were auctioned at Fort Napier at a sale that attracted the biggest crowd ever to attend an auction in the city. More than £300 was raised during keen bidding, and among the items sold was a 'rally cart' that raised 20 guineas and a polo pony that sold for 15 guineas.²¹



Fort Napier abandoned. These two photographs were taken in 1914 after the garrison had withdrawn and show opposite sides of the old barrack square built by the 45th Regiment in the 1840s.

(a) South-west angle of the square. Original Officers' Mess on left and original Officers' quarters on the right.

(b) North-east angle. Most of these buildings have been demolished (note the wagon tracks).

(Photographs: Natal Museum — original by C.J. Bird in 1914)

Wartime censorship prevented the press from publishing details of troop movements, so the exact date that the South Staffordshire Regiment left Pietermaritzburg cannot be determined from a study of the *Natal Witness*. On the night of Wednesday, 19 August, the regimental band gave a farewell performance in the City Hall to a packed and emotional house which stood for the national anthem and gave three rousing cheers for the band. The following day's paper also carried an interview with Lt.-Col. Ovens on the history of the Staffords in which he pointed out that the regiment first served in South Africa in 1806 when the Cape was occupied permanently by the British.²²

On Saturday, 22 August, the editor of the *Natal Witness*, Horace Rose, touched on the real fears that the withdrawal of the imperial garrison had aroused in the minds of the colonists:

In South Africa, in the event of the withdrawal of Imperial troops for service elsewhere the question of the native population at once assumes an importance beyond the normal. So far it is true that from the natives and from the coloured people nothing has been heard save expressions of loyalty and devotion, but it is an axiom of South African policy that behind the amenities of a fractional civilised community must always stand the power of the rifle to enforce law and order.²³

Rose reassured his readers that the Union's forces were adequate for this purpose, but added that the Government should use the Native Affairs Department to satisfy 'native curiosity' before it developed into a 'sense of uneasiness or apprehension'.²⁴

The fears of the editor were doubtless the fears of many white Natalians, namely physical insecurity in the face of a numerically superior black population. Hamish Patterson lays great stress on the military weakness of the colony of Natal and of white settlers *vis-à-vis* the black population, particularly before 1879.²⁵ Brookes and Webb point out that with only a small garrison, colonial rule in Natal depended on 'moral sanctions' and add that the fear of 'Native rising' was strong, enduring and at times almost 'pathological'.²⁶

The situation in Natal and South Africa in 1914 differed radically from the situation in the 1870s: there was no longer a strong Zulu kingdom and the frontiers had been 'closed'.²⁷ The single battalion at Fort Napier was a reassuring symbol of a worldwide imperial power supporting the local settler structures, but it was not essential to settler security. Nevertheless the withdrawal of the garrison coincided with a titanic struggle in Europe that Great Britain was by no means certain of winning. Hence the immediate call from the editor of the *Witness* for the official manipulation of the flow of information about the war to the black population.

Intimidation and the internment camp: 1914–1919

On the same day that the last major news reports on the Fort Napier garrison appeared in the *Natal Witness*, there is a brief reference to an event in Johannesburg that was to have important repercussions in Pietermaritzburg and at Fort Napier in particular. The newspaper reported that reservists in the Austrian and German armed forces were being detained at the Milner Park showgrounds.²⁸ The Union Government arranged for the detention of enemy aliens at various places throughout the Union during August and September

1914. As the news from the Western Front grew more dismal for the British, so the situation within the Union deteriorated and in mid-September rebellion broke out in the Afrikaner heartland. Whether or not this caused the Union Government to move the internees to more 'loyal' parts of the country is not entirely clear but in 1916 the Prime Minister, Louis Botha, informed a Pietermaritzburg deputation that the Government had selected Fort Napier as an internment camp because Natal was the 'most British portion' of the country.²⁹

On 11 September 1914 the internment camp was moved from the Milner Park showgrounds to Roberts Heights and internees from other parts of the country were also concentrated there. Over the weekend of 24–25 October the internees at Roberts Heights were packed into trains and moved to Pietermaritzburg. The *Natal Witness* reported that a commotion occurred at the Pietermaritzburg railway station on Sunday, 25 October, as a train, containing 2000 men arrived from Pretoria. Col. Weighton, the Officer Commanding the Pietermaritzburg Defence Rifle Association, called out his men to guard the prisoners as they marched, wearing aspects of 'sullen weariness', from the station to Fort Napier. The city's Central Gaol was cleared of its supplies of blankets and mattresses as empty British barrack rooms were turned into quarters for the King's enemies.³⁰ Throughout October German internees arrived in dribs and drabs from various parts of the Union and from other British colonies.³¹

On 27 October a further commotion occurred as the city was swept by rumours that the German prisoners at Fort Napier were attempting a mass break-out and that men of the Rifle Association were required to prevent it. Hundreds of middle-aged and middle-class white Pietermaritzburg men poured up Church and Longmarket streets to mill about the closed gates of the Fort. Col. Manning, the officer-in-charge of the internees, tartly informed the press that there had been no break-out and that he had merely requested extra guards as a precaution, but twenty times the required number of guards had appeared.³² The slightly hysterical tenor of Pietermaritzburg patriotic feelings is clearly discernible in this incident. Two days later the Rifle Association held a mass meeting at the showgrounds and Col. Weighton had more than enough support to provide Col. Manning with 50 extra guards for Fort Napier and to station a further 25 men at strategic points around the city.³³ These precautions lasted for as long as the rebellion lasted and the patriotic feelings of the citizens of Pietermaritzburg were constantly whipped up by strident pro-British, anti-German, and anti-Afrikaner rebel articles. The disorderly rabble that pitched up at the gates of Fort Napier on 27 October 1914 was an unpleasant foretaste of the problems that were to afflict the city the following year and much of the raw emotional atmosphere that pervaded the city can be blamed very largely on the editor of the *Natal Witness*, Horace Rose.

A.T. van Wyk has described Rose as having the most vitriolic pen in Natal. He 'propagated with assiduous zeal his belief in the omnipotence of the British Empire and the supremacy of the British race . . . and bedeviled relations between the English and Afrikaners'.³⁴ But it is clear from a study of the *Natal Witness* during the First World War that the pages of the newspaper reek of a xenophobia directed more widely than just at Afrikaners. These attitudes were prevalent in the British press as well, but in Pietermaritzburg they contributed to the most unfortunate consequences.

The internees at Fort Napier were originally entirely men of military age,



German internees in Fort Napier in 1915.

(Photograph: Natal Archives)

but as the Union Government grew more alarmed by the rebellion, the net was spread more widely and German settlers of long standing were swept up in it. A pathetic group of near-destitute wives and children crept into the city seeking lodgings and charity so that they could be near their husbands and fathers confined in the Fort. These unfortunate victims of a conflict not of their making were snubbed, ignored or patronized by the whites of the city according to temperament or affiliation.

On 7 May 1915 an event occurred that resulted in the spread of terror throughout Pietermaritzburg: the Cunard liner *Lusitania*, carrying 1200 passengers, was sunk by the German submarine U20, off the Old Head of Kinsale on the Southern Irish coast. Allied and American opinion was appalled, but many Germans, within and without the Central Powers, celebrated a great naval victory. The British propaganda machine portrayed the sinking as an act of terrible savagery and the gutter press whipped up an intense anti-German feeling among a public whose nerves were already made raw by war.³⁵ In Pietermaritzburg, Horace Rose's *Natal Witness* was as crude in its anti-German feelings as the worst British tabloids.

On 12 May, under the headline 'Enemies in our midst', Rose demanded a mass meeting to condemn the sinking of the *Lusitania* and accused the Government of being lax in its dealings with enemy nationals in the Union:

Our reply to the crime of the *Lusitania* should be an instant and overwhelming agitation for every German enemy in the Union to be forthwith interned and for all trade relationships with Germans at large to be stopped immediately.³⁶

It appears that the most virulently anti-German section of the community were the white English-speaking railway workers, who petitioned the Mayor demanding a public meeting and the internment of all Germans.³⁷ Men and women suspected of having German sympathies were harassed in their homes and workplaces and those who worked on the railways suffered acutely. Rumours that local Germans had celebrated the sinking of the *Lusitania* swept the city, but no public figures used the press to appeal for calm. On the contrary, there is evidence that civic and political leaders were involved in the incitement of the crowds.³⁸

In these circumstances the riot that occurred in Pietermaritzburg, on the evening of Friday, 13 May 1915, was inevitable. At 7 pm. an organized, purposeful crowd of 400 men marched down Church Street smashing the windows of shops and offices owned by people suspected of being pro-German or simply having German-sounding names. The crowd moved from Niesewand the optician, to Schwake's jewellers, to Baumann's Bakery in Boshoff Street (where they set fire to several carts), to Timm Bros and finally to Hanover House where it was rumoured that Germans had cheered the sinking of the *Lusitania*. The mood became uglier and uglier and the police finally intervened decisively and managed to prevent the loss of life and further destruction.³⁹

On the following evening a mass meeting was held in the City Hall and fiery resolutions were passed demanding that all suspected German sympathizers be dismissed from government, municipal or other public employment; that all their business ventures be boycotted and that they be interned at Fort Napier.⁴⁰ As a result of the meeting the civic leaders and principal notables formed a Citizens' Vigilance Committee to give effect to the resolutions passed at the public meeting. It appears from the minutes of the committee that on the one hand the Mayor and other leaders hoped to use the committee to cool down inflamed feelings and protect victims of intimidation, while on the other hand the committee was also used to conduct a witch-hunt into the private lives and family ties of suspected Germans or German sympathizers.

At the first meeting of the committee on 17 May, the Mayor, Cllr. P.H. Taylor, was elected Chairman. Other members included the Deputy Mayor, Cllr. Sanders, the Town Clerk, Cllrs. W.J. O'Brien and D. Paton, the Hon. J.G. Maydon, F.S. Tatham KC, Col. J. Weighton (of the Defence Rifle Association), and Messrs D.F. Forsyth, A.E. Hirst, G.B. Anderson, J.C. Howard and E.W. Young. Messrs Anderson, Howard and Young appear to have been the spokesmen for the inflamed railwaymen. The committee set itself the task of inviting all 'male adult citizens of German, Austrian or Turkish descent . . . for the last two generations' to give the committee 'full particulars of their antecedents, including those in Government or Municipal employment.' The committee decided to issue certificates, signed by the Mayor and the Town Clerk, to those 'applicants' whose *bona fides* satisfied it. The committee was unable, for legal reasons, to force the Corporation to cancel immediately all licences granted to Germans or Austrians, but instead passed a motion proposed by F.S. Tatham (a barrister), that ' . . . so far as the law allows, enemy subjects should be prevented from trading' and that it should be the 'policy of the Union to restrict trading facilities to British subjects'.⁴¹

The full investigations of the Vigilance Committee are a separate story, but it is important to note the stress that city notables laid on the commercial

activities of the Germans. Clearly patriotism was used to mask a greedy attempt by elements in the city's business community to secure financial and commercial advantages, such as licences previously granted to Germans, for themselves.

A second important point that emerges from the minutes of the Vigilance Committee is the extent to which people associated with the internees at Fort Napier were victimized during this period of 'unrest'. At its meeting on 18 May 1915 the committee heard evidence of the wife and three children of an internee being evicted from their lodgings because the landlady received threats that her house would be burned down. The women and children were given temporary shelter in Fort Napier, but permanent accommodation was not available.⁴² The City Solicitor, Mr A.O. Kufal, received threats, not only because of his German name (although he was born in Ireland), but because he acted as an interpreter for the internees.⁴³ On 20 May the Vigilance Committee resolved that the wives and families of internees

. . . should be distributed, as far as possible amongst their own people at New Germany, New Hanover, etc. and should be removed from communities where the population is purely British in order to save irritation, and for the sake of themselves.⁴⁴

The Vigilance Committee ceased meeting after a week of nightly sittings and the tension in the city eased. One of the factors that contributed to this was the success of the Union forces in conquering German South-West Africa.⁴⁵

The following year trouble flared up again after Lord Kitchener was drowned when HMS *Hampshire* was sunk. On this occasion the police and civil authorities acted with greater speed and energy and forestalled the demonstrations which apparently threatened the internees at Fort Napier as well as the German civilians in the city. The Union Government was, however, alarmed by the unrest and decided to move the internment camp away from the city. This resulted in a high level delegation headed by Mr Taylor, the Mayor, and including Messrs W.J. O'Brien and D.F. Forsyth (formerly members of the Vigilance Committee) travelling to Pretoria to meet the Prime Minister. The deputation informed General Botha that the demonstration would not have resulted in an attack on Fort Napier and stressed that the 'overwhelming majority' of the citizens were opposed to violence. The Prime Minister was also assured that the local authorities would ensure the safety of the camp if it were permitted to remain in the city.⁴⁶ One of the factors that was stressed in the meeting was the probable cost of removing the prisoners to Kimberley (the proposed alternative site) and this leads one to postulate that the real reason for the city notables urging the government to retain the camp in Pietermaritzburg was economic: the camp brought business to the city which replaced that lost when the garrison was withdrawn. While the citizens of Pietermaritzburg were anxious to prevent Germans from trading with them they did not want to lose the market that the camp offered, even if the customers were German. The Government backed down and the camp remained at Fort Napier until 1919 when the internees were released and many were repatriated, willingly or unwillingly, to Germany.

There were very few press reports on conditions in the internment camp and as the records of the Commissioner for Enemy Subjects are only available in

the Central Archives in Pretoria, it has not been possible to provide a comprehensive picture of life in the camp. The 'camp captains' did, however, submit representation to the House of Assembly's Select Committee on the Enemies' Repatriation and Denaturalization Bill in 1919 and they hint at poor housing, poor food and intense boredom. They are also quite explicit about the financial hardship common to all internees and the discrimination suffered by those who were released on parole.⁴⁷

The complaints of the camp captains are corroborated in the annual report of the Medical Officer of Health for 1917–1918. He reported to the Mayor that there was an outbreak of enteric fever at Fort Napier in January 1918 and that approximately 30 internees were infected and 'two or three' died. He added that the Union health authorities had concluded that the origins of the disease and its spread were due to conditions in the camp itself.⁴⁸

The fate of the Fort: 1919–1925

Once the internment camp was closed down in 1919, Fort Napier stood empty, an embarrassment to the Imperial, Union and local authorities. The Union Government permitted homeless ex-servicemen and their families to rent some of the quarters, but no positive use could be found for the complex until the Imperial Government transferred ownership of its properties in South Africa to the Union Government. Negotiations began in earnest between the Union and the British governments in 1921 and from the first the Pietermaritzburg City Council asked William O'Brien (by this time a Member of Parliament) to monitor the negotiations as they affected Fort Napier.⁴⁹

Protracted negotiations followed between Pietermaritzburg, Pretoria, Cape Town and London. In November 1921, the Secretary for Defence, Sir Roland Bourne, visited Pietermaritzburg and proposed that the City Council take over the whole of Fort Napier (excluding a small area required by the railways) and that in return the Corporation give the Defence Department free use of land in the city on which a flight station and training camp would be established. Services (such as electricity and water, etc.) and their supporting buildings would also have to be supplied free by the Corporation. Sir Roland aroused the Council's interest, but grave reservations were expressed over the vagueness of the railway's requirements.⁵⁰

Here matters rested and the Council was given to understand that nothing would be done until the Union Parliament passed the legislation that would enable the government to take over the imperial properties. In early June 1922, O'Brien informed the City Council that the Bill was being considered by Parliament and that he intended requesting the Minister of Defence to allow the Council to acquire Fort Napier.⁵¹ Three weeks later, the Mayor, Cllr. Sanders, reported hearing a rumour that the Government intended establishing a mental hospital at Fort Napier and complained that no consultations had taken place between the Government and the City Council. Mr O'Brien was requested to investigate.⁵²

O'Brien's investigations uncovered an apparent conflict of interests between various government departments: the Department of Defence wished to negotiate with the City Council over the whole property, the Department of the Interior (which administered mental hospitals) wanted all the Methven Barracks; and the railways was stipulating its requirements independently of both.⁵³

On 31 July 1922, the Mayor called a special Council meeting and issued a public statement summarizing Sir Roland Bourne's proposals and criticizing the Union Government for unilaterally deciding to establish a mental hospital at Fort Napier without consulting the Council.⁵⁴ Even this criticism failed to elicit a coherent response from the government, but in December the Chief of the General Staff of the UDF, Brigadier-General A.J. Brink, arrived in Pietermaritzburg with new proposals for the Fort. Sir Roland Bourne's proposals were to be regarded as 'entirely cancelled' and instead the Defence Department was prepared to offer 1 114 acres of the Fort Napier site and its buildings to the City Council for £94 145. This was practically the whole site, but the offer was hedged with qualifications.⁵⁵

The Council mulled over the matter during the Christmas holidays, but in January a letter arrived from Brigadier Brink stating that the original offer contained certain regrettable errors and in fact the Defence Department could only offer the Council 1010 acres of Fort Napier for £94 145 and this sum excluded the Polo Grounds which would have to be separately valued. This letter virtually killed negotiations between the Council and the Government and the whole matter was stood down *sine die*.⁵⁶ A year or so later, the Council managed to acquire the Polo Grounds and in December 1924 a deputation of tenants from Fort Napier begged the Council to provide them with alternative accommodation because they would have to leave the Fort in February 1925 to make way for the mental hospital.⁵⁷



The end of the beginning: Monument to the 45th Regiment in Fort Napier Cemetery in 1914. A replica stands outside the City Hall and this original monument has recently been tastelessly replaced by a modern replica in the cemetery.

(Photograph: Natal Museum — original by C.J. Bird in 1914)

Conclusion

For its 71 years as a military post, Fort Napier exercised a dominant influence on the city's life and its physical position also enabled it to shape the human geography of the city. Between 1910 and 1914 the garrison was a potent symbol of past glories and the city's sentiments were sustained by the glitter of garrison life. After the garrison departed Fort Napier acquired a new symbolism and its German occupants became a focal point for bigotry and intense racial hostility. After the Armistice the Fort became a political embarrassment, but the City Council invested considerable time and effort in attempting to acquire it, at great cost, for the city. However, bureaucratic incompetence and Pretoria's double-dealing thwarted all their efforts. As the tangle of red tape tightened, interest in Fort Napier waned and by the time the mental hospital was established the garrison had become a ten-year-old memory and the complex was no longer a focal point for imperial sentiment.

What is probably of even greater importance is the fact that Fort Napier no longer provided the city's business sector with an important market and ultimately, money mattered more than imperial sentiment or anti-German hostility.

REFERENCES

- ¹ This article is a revised version of a paper presented under the title, 'Fort Napier, from imperial post to mental hospital 1910–1925', at a workshop on 'Natal in the Union Period' held by the Department of Historical Studies at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg on 27–28 October 1988. The original paper should be consulted for an in-depth consideration of some of the theoretical aspects of imperial military history.
- ² For example, A.F. Hattersley, *More annals of Natal* (London 1936); *Pietermaritzburg panorama: a survey of one hundred years of an African city* (Pietermaritzburg, 1938) and *Portrait of a city* (Pietermaritzburg, 1951). A similar approach is followed in E.H. Brookes and C. de B. Webb, *A history of Natal* (Pietermaritzburg, 1965). For a recent work in the Hattersley genre see Ruth Gordon, *The place of the elephant* (Pietermaritzburg, 1981).
- ³ See P.S. Thompson, 'Natal and the Union 1909–1939: an historiographical essay' and A.J. van Wyk, 'Press, public and politics in Natal 1910–1915' in *Natal and the Union, 1909–1939: A collection of papers on affairs in Natal during the formative period of the Union of South Africa, presented at a workshop at the University of Natal, July 5–6* (Pietermaritzburg, 1978). See A.H. Duminy, 'The "Natal Party"', 1910' and T. Wilks, 'The smaller parties of Natal: 1909–1960' in *Natal, 1909–1961: A collection of papers on developments in Natal in the Union period, presented at a workshop at the University of Natal, October 27–28, 1988* (Pietermaritzburg, 1988). See also Brookes & Webb, Chaps. XXV, XXVI and XXVII (pp. 248–285).
- ⁴ R.J. Bouch (ed.), *Infantry in South Africa 1652–1976* (Pretoria, 1977), p. 50.
- ⁵ *Archives of the Town Clerk of Pietermaritzburg*: Natal Archives: 3/PMB 1/1/17, Council Minutes, 21 April 1910, p. 908.
- ⁶ *Corporation Year Book 1912–13* (Pietermaritzburg, 1914): 'Regiments stationed at Fort Napier', pp. 30–31. (Hereinafter referred to as CYB.)
- ⁷ D.L. Schaffer, *The establishment of a theatrical tradition in Pietermaritzburg* (unpub. PhD thesis, 1979), pp. 9–12.
- ⁸ John Benyon, *Proconsul and paramountcy in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg, 1980), p. 139; Brookes & Webb, p. 120 and Adrian Preston (ed.), *The South African diaries of Sir Garnet Wolseley 1875* (Cape Town, 1971), p. 157.
- ⁹ *Natal Mercury: Pietermaritzburg centennial supplement* (1938): Reminiscences of Messrs Mockler and Froomberg, pp. 36–37.
- ¹⁰ Bouch, p. 50.
- ¹¹ CYB 1912–1913, p. 21.
- ¹² *Natal Witness*, Sat., July 25, 1914, p. 2.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, Wed., July 19, 1914, p. 7.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Wed., Aug. 5, 1914, p. 7.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Sat., Aug. 8, 1914, p. 5.

- ¹⁶ Ibid., Tues., Aug. 11, 1914, p. 5.
- ¹⁷ Ibid., Mon., Aug. 10, 1914, p. 5.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., Tues., Aug. 11, 1914, p. 5.
- ¹⁹ A. S. Skelley, *The Victorian army at home* (Montreal, 1977), pp. 143, 160–4 & 166.
- ²⁰ *Natal Witness*, Thurs., Aug. 13, 1914, p. 6.
- ²¹ Ibid., Fri., Aug. 14, 1914, p. 1.
- ²² Ibid., Thurs., Aug. 20, 1914, p. 5 ('Staffs' bands farewell) and p. 6 (Interview with Col. Ovens). In Gordon, p. 116 the date of 14 August is given for the last 'Retreat' ceremony; R. G. Crossley states that 12 August 1914 '... witnessed the final departure of the Imperial Garrison, when the 1st Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment, after their drums had beaten the Retreat in front of the City Hall for the last time, marched away to embark from Durban, for the carnage of the First Ypres.' *SA Military History Journal* 2 (5), June 1973, pp. 183–184. Both Gordon and Crossley ignore the band performance of 19 August.
- ²³ *Natal Witness*, Sat., Aug. 22, 1914, p. 4: Editorial: 'Natives and the war'.
- ²⁴ loc. cit.
- ²⁵ Hamish Paterson, *The military organisation of the colony of Natal 1881–1910* (unpub. MA thesis, 1985), pp. 1–5 & pp. 129–135.
- ²⁶ Brookes & Webb, pp. 113–114.
- ²⁷ See H. Lamar & L. Thompson (eds), *The frontier in history: North America and Southern Africa compared* (New Haven & London, 1981), pp. 9–10 for a brief analysis of the role of the military on frontiers and on the concept of the 'closing' of the 'frontier'.
- ²⁸ *Natal Witness*, Fri., Aug. 21, 1914, p. 5.
- ²⁹ CYB 1915–1916, p. 28.
- ³⁰ *Natal Witness*, Mon., Oct. 26, 1914, p. 1.
- ³¹ Ibid., Sat., Oct. 31, 1914, p. 1.
- ³² Ibid., Wed., Oct. 28, p. 1.
- ³³ Ibid., Thurs., Oct. 29, 1914, p. 5.
- ³⁴ A. J. van Wyk, 'Press, public and politics in Natal 1910–1914', pp. 1–2, in *Natal and the Union, 1909–1939*.
- ³⁵ See M. Maddocks, *The Great Liners* (Amsterdam, 1978), pp. 136–137 for a brief summary of the sinking of the *Lusitania* and its exploitation for propaganda purposes.
- ³⁶ *Natal Witness*, Wed., May 12, 1915, p. 1. (editorial).
- ³⁷ Ibid., Thurs., May 13, 1915, p. 1.
- ³⁸ 3/PMB 9/3, *Minutes of the Citizens' Vigilance Committee*: cutting from the *Natal Witness* (May 18, 1915): 'Vigilance Committee'.
- ³⁹ *Natal Witness*, Fri., May 14, 1915, p. 1.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., Mon., May 17, 1915, p. 1.
- ⁴¹ 3/PMB 9/3: Minutes of the meeting held on 17 May 1915, p. 1–2.
- ⁴² Ibid., Minutes of meeting of 18 May 1915, p. 2.
- ⁴³ Ibid., p. 3.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., Minutes of meeting of 20 May 1915, p. 5.
- ⁴⁵ CYB 1914–1915 (Pietermaritzburg, 1916), p. 23.
- ⁴⁶ CYB 1915–1916 (Pietermaritzburg, 1917), pp. 27–29.
- ⁴⁷ SC 12–19, *Report of the select committee on the Enemies' Repatriation and Denaturalization Bill*, appendix A, pp. i–xii.
- ⁴⁸ CYB 1917–1918 (Pietermaritzburg, 1919), p. 50.
- ⁴⁹ 3/PMB 7/11/23: *Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee (FGPC)*, 9 June 1921, p. 66.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., *FGPC Minutes*, 24 Nov. 1921, pp. 153–154.
- ⁵¹ 3/PMB 7/11/24, *FGPC Minutes*, 6 June 1922, p. 62.
- ⁵² Ibid., *FGPC Minutes*, 27 June 1922, p. 70.
- ⁵³ Ibid., *FGPC Minutes*, 6 July 1922, p. 75.
- ⁵⁴ 3/PMB 1/1/9, *Minutes of the City Council*, 31 July 1922, pp. 115–117.
- ⁵⁵ 3/PMB 7/11/24, *FGPC Minutes*, 5 Dec. 1922, pp. 150–151.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid., *FGPC Minutes*, 11 Jan 1923, pp. 159–160.
- ⁵⁷ 3/PMB 1/1/9, *Minutes of the City Council*, 9 Dec. 1924, p. 59.