

Soldiers of Empire Database

Little did I think 50 years ago when I began researching my family history that it would involve a lengthy interest in a group of British military men who chose to make New Zealand their home. My great- great- grandfather was a Howick Fencible and his daughter married a soldier from the 65th Regiment.

In the 1980's when I was a foundation member of the NZ Fencible Society I started a paper slip index collecting details for the Fencibles and their families. At the same time I met Hugh and Lyn Hughes who were indexing the soldiers discharged in NZ. Their work did not involve recording any information other than the discharge details so I started another paper slip index to record genealogical data for this group. Some NZSG members may well remember me giving talks with a table full of microfiche storage boxes full of slips.

With arrival of computers it became obvious that computerising the index was the way to go. Entering the database began with the Fencible records that I had collected and also material held by the NZ Fencible Society. It soon became obvious that there were quite a number of Fencible widows and daughters who were marrying men from the regiments so it became sensible to include all the discharged men. Having amalgamated the two groups I then discovered Lord Ranfurly's 1902 Roll of Honour that listed all the known British veterans residing in NZ at that time. By adding these men it became obvious I had created a substantial one stop shop database for anyone who had a British military man residing in NZ from 1840 -1902. The arrival of Paperspast then made available another source that continues to give me more names for men other than those in the previous named sources.

The database is by no means complete and continues to grow daily as I discover new material. To date the database holds almost 70,000 individual names of British military personal, their wives and descendants, as well as other supporting documentation gathered from a very diverse group of sources.

Access to the database is limited at this stage as it is still a work in progress but it is hoped eventually to make it available online. I am happy to answer specific questions as to whether an individual's name is recorded and the sort of information held. Contact can be made through the [NZ Fencible Society](#) Facebook page.

Garth Houltham