

## Good things take time, lots of time!

- finally... new interpretation at North Head Historic Reserve (Maungauika), Auckland

I feel it's important to state at the outset that I was Johnny-come-lately to this project. This is David Veart's baby. Dave is our Programme Manager Historic and he's a man in demand. Higher on his writing agenda are the books he's working on, under the whip of his publisher. Check out a review of Dave's latest award winning book "Digging Up The Past: Archaeology For The Young & Curious" [here](http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/nzpostchildrenawards). (link to <http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/nzpostchildrenawards> )

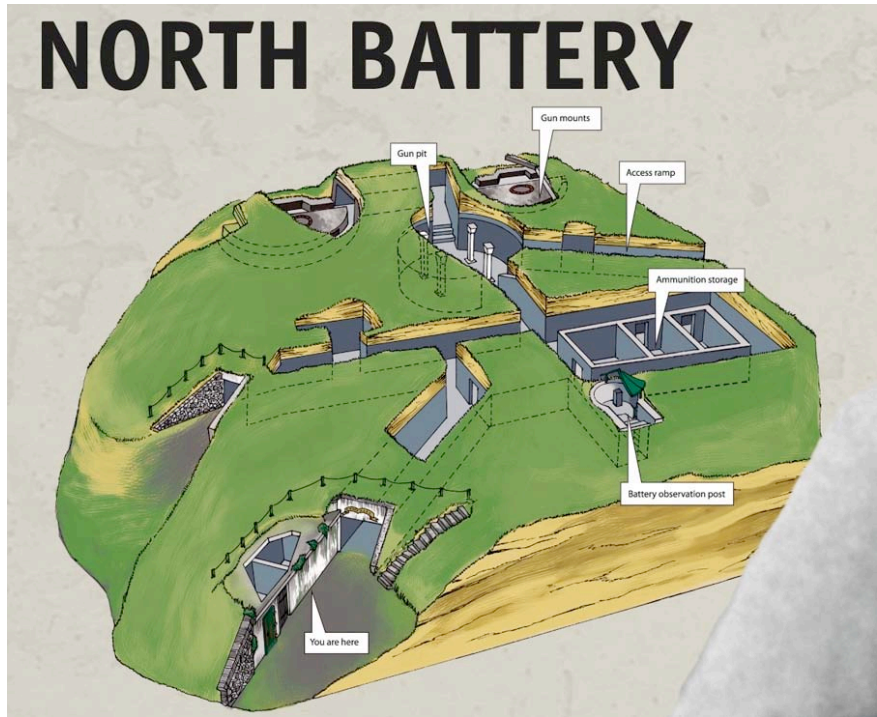


Dave Veart – DOC's historic guru

Dave asked me to be involved in the interp project here at North Head at a point where things were already 80% complete. Jan Ramp and his team at Waiheke Island-based 'Snapper Graphics' had already created the layout for the 12 main signs, 12 smaller ones, and the stainless-steel model of the 'disappearing gun' was underway.

Due to DOC's historic budget constraints Dave was keenly aware of the need for further dynamic interp at North Head – a site that is visited by around 350,000 visitors a year. The last interp, completed over ten years ago just wasn't doing the trick anymore.

Jan and his team are adept at conveying complicated concepts using a combination of text and images and fantastic design including careful use of colour. Features of the new project include: life-size figures; subtle sepia toned photos of detail; a moveable model of the large 'disappearing' gun; and fantastic 'cutout' drawings that give visitors a sense of the underground tunnels that lure visitors to North Head in the first place.



One of three detailed 'cutout' drawings made by Snapper Graphics to help interpret North Head.

So here's a run-down of what was created as part of the project:

1. Five life-size figures representing the various eras of military occupation of North Head, with a sixth figure representing DOC's current role on the reserve. Each figure stands alongside information about the relevant period. This series was installed at the entrance to the Summit Battery, along with a 'summary' panel of all 6 figures.



North Head in Uniform – summary panel. Six life-size figures tell the story of the military occupation, then reserve status of the mountain. Sited at the entrance to the Summit Battery.



Examples of the life-size figures – from Naval Artillery volunteers in the late 1800s (left), the Naval Communications Training School from 1958 – 1996 (middle), through to DOC’s presence on ‘the hill’ since 2000, featuring Steph our marine ranger (right).

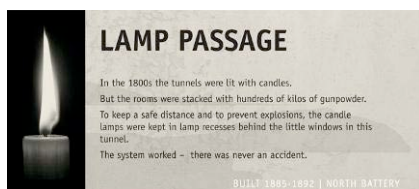
2. A large (almost) life-size photo from circa 1900 of a group of garrison gunners (having a break and waiting for the next drill) alongside a panel with further info about the site and one of the ‘cutout’ images – situated at the entrance to North Battery.





The North Battery sign featuring a life-sized photo of the garrison gunners circa 1900. This sign also features a 'cutout' map of the site – these images give the visitor a sense of what lies beneath (tunnels and rooms to explore!).

3. A selection of smaller, subtle signs each featuring a sepia toned photo of relevant detail and accompanying text which interprets parts of North Battery, placed throughout the site.



Two of the twelve smaller interp signs positioned throughout the North Battery, featuring one sepia "detail" photo on each sign.

4. A sign interpreting the disappearing gun site, with it's tunnels, hand-picked cave, 'speaking tube' water pipes, crew rooms, magazines, and how to access beneath the gun itself. All shown via another 'cutout' image. The same sign appears at key access points to the site.



L - Disappearing Gun South Battery orientation sign. The gun itself (and memorial flagpole) can be seen directly in front of the sign. The concrete plinths either side of the gravel path are to stop tanks! A white-washed entrance to tunnels beneath can be seen to the right of the sign.

R - North Head's disappearing gun - with Auckland city and Mt Victoria in the background. The area is a memorial to WWI and WWII soldiers so it's important to ensure signs are placed sensitively.

5. A stainless steel model of the disappearing gun. Housed in a protective dome and featuring an external handle which can be used to operate the small model's movement from loading to firing position.



L - Photo taken by the local paper the "North Shore Times Advertiser".

R - The model below the gun, on a plinth beneath a protective plastic dome – note the handle.



L - Disappearing gun model - loading position

R - Fire!

6. A new welcome sign – friendlier and more engaging than its predecessor.

**North Head  
Historic Reserve**

### Explore North Head Maungauika

**Volcano**  
This is a very old volcanic cone, one of the oldest in the Auckland volcanic field. About 50,000 years ago a series of explosions built this layered mound of once molten rock.

**Fort**  
Maori were the first to settle here, naming the hill Maungauika after an early ancestor. Gardening in the rich volcanic soil and access to kai moana (sea food) made this an attractive place to live. With European settlement the summit was a natural choice as a pilot station for the harbour entrance. Plans of fortification led to the rapid development of a network of tunnels, guns, searchlights and other fortifications. These were last functioning during the 1950s.

**Park**  
The headland was first protected in 1972 when it was included as one of the few national features in the Hauraki Gulf Maritime Park. Since 1990 the Department of Conservation has looked after the historic sites and maintained the Reserve for public enjoyment.

**North Head map**  
Follow the marked loop tracks to find highlights or just roam!  
There are many shortcuts that connect parts of the marked loops.

**The Summit Loop** 25 minutes  
Follow green map line and marker posts with green bands

- Great views in all directions from the Summit
- A display area and short historic film
- Department of Conservation Auckland Area offices

*Look for Hauraki Gulf islands, city buildings, ferries and yachts, other volcanoes*

**The Tunnels Loop** 20 minutes  
Follow yellow map line and marker posts with yellow bands

- Tunnels and historic defence structures
- The 8 inch Disappearing Gun and the Submarine Battery
- Easy walking grade

*Look for dark tunnels, disappearing gun, pathways between terraces*

**The Coastal Loop** 30 minutes  
Follow white map line and marker posts with white bands

- A westerline view of the inner harbour entrance
- Evidence of the volcano that formed the headland
- War-time structures built for searchlights and submarine boom

*Look for rocky shore life, shells, layers of volcanic ash*

**WARNING:** Be aware of holes, sudden drop offs, uneven surfaces and cliff edges. Take care when exploring all areas of the Reserve and supervise children. A torch is recommended for exploring the tunnels.

Vehicle gates are locked at 8pm, Cheltenham Beach and Takaranga Road pedestrian gates are locked at 10pm

Keep dogs on a leash at all times. Owners please remove dog litter

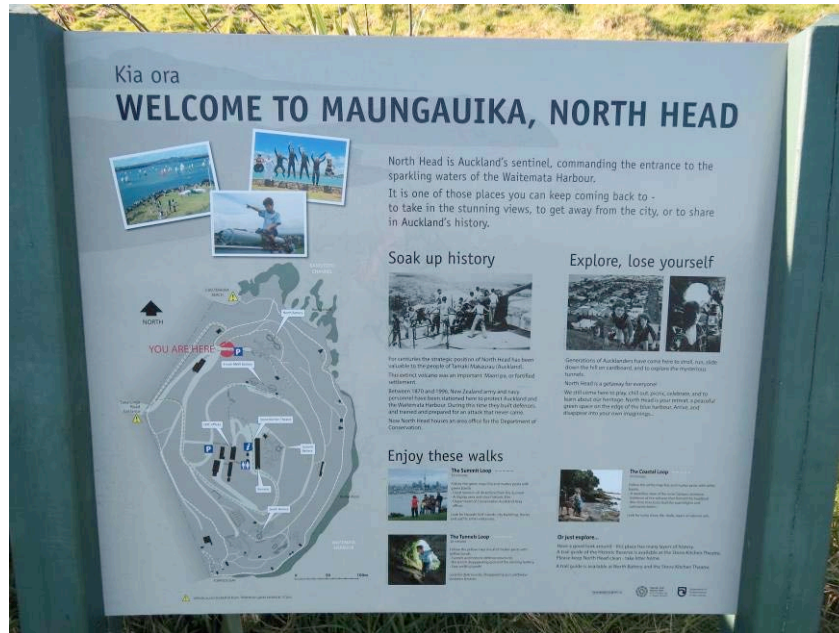
Please take your rubbish away with you or place in bins provided

Do not remove or disturb any plants or historic features

No Fires  
No Camping

**DOC HOTLINE**  
0800 365 444

Out with the old... North Head's older welcome sign.



In with the new! A fresh looking North Head welcome sign.

7. A sign for our threatened native plant garden. Not exactly historic but in keeping with the war theme and utilising the same (almost) life-sized figure (DOC ranger) features.





Green War! A sign to interpret our threatened plant garden.

It's great to see the new interp being enjoyed by visitors. When I take my daily stroll around the mountain it makes me smile to see people stopping to read the new signs, pointing, and chatting.

Bear in mind that this was only "Phase One" of Dave's grand plan... but given further budget constraints on the horizon, and Dave's imminent retirement... we'll have to wait and see.

Dave was keen that the interp should be 'discovered' in the landscape and careful site placement has ensured that this is the case, giving visitors a better understanding of the military history they see as they explore one of Auckland's icon destinations.

By Sandra Jack  
Community Relations Ranger, DOC, Auckland Area Office  
[sjack@doc.govt.nz](mailto:sjack@doc.govt.nz)