

Whatawhata Waikato War Soldiers' Memorial, Cemetery Road, Whatawhata

Allot 190A Parish of Pukete
Property no. 2003835



5 March 2020

By January 1864 a redoubt had been built at Whatawhata to keep the Waipa River supply route open during the Waikato War; a small military cemetery was subsequently established on the riverbank. Erosion undermined this site and some or all of the remains interred in this cemetery were subsequently relocated to the town cemetery, possibly in the early 1900s. When the Town of Whatawhata was surveyed in 1890 twin Native Burial and Cemetery Reserves were located on allotments 284 and 285 overlooking the Waipa River at the south end of the village (see SO 5813). In the event, the people of Whatawhata buried their dead in Ngaruawahia until a cemetery was established to the west of the town in the early 1890s.

The Whatawhata Waikato War Soldiers' Memorial was erected by the New Zealand government and unveiled by RF Bollard MP on Anniversary Day (29 January) in 1914; MP JA Young was *not* in attendance although that had been intended. The memorial was the first of a number erected in the Waikato specifically at the behest of Edith Statham of the Victoria League. Official efforts to commit the government to erecting memorials at Pokeno and Whatawhata to commemorate the soldiers buried there had been in train since at least 1899. As a government monument, the headstone is maintained by the Ministry of Culture and Heritage (MCH).

Recommendation: The memorial was damaged in 2015 and repaired with the installation of an inscribed backing stone in 2017. It is not in original condition, the headstone and base both having been altered very recently. The heavy post and rail surround, while intended to protect the memorial from further damage, detracts from its appearance. The memorial lacks sufficient authenticity and is best managed and protected by MCH.

Dr Ann McEwan
6 March 2020

