

Vietnam War gun coming to New Plymouth

Last updated 16:54, November 5 2015



Sean Flynn

Unidentified gunners from the 161st Battery of the Royal New Zealand Artillery (RNZA) in Vietnam preparing a 105 mm L5 Pack Howitzer for firing.

New Plymouth is set to become the new home of a gun used by New Zealand troops during the Vietnam War.

On Friday a Pack Howitzer will be installed near the New Plymouth Cenotaph.

The Pack Howitzer has been restored by the New Zealand Army in Trentham and will be sited opposite the Cenotaph in the green space next to Regina Place.

The project is a joint one between the New Plymouth RSA and New Plymouth District Council, with sponsorship for the refurbishment coming from different sections of the New Zealand Army.

More than 3,000 New Zealand military and civilian personnel served in Vietnam between 1963 and 1975 and New Plymouth mayor Andrew Judd said it was fitting for the Pack Howitzer to be near the city's memorial to New Zealanders who never returned from war.

"The gun will remind us of how some of our soldiers fought, and how some of them died," he said.

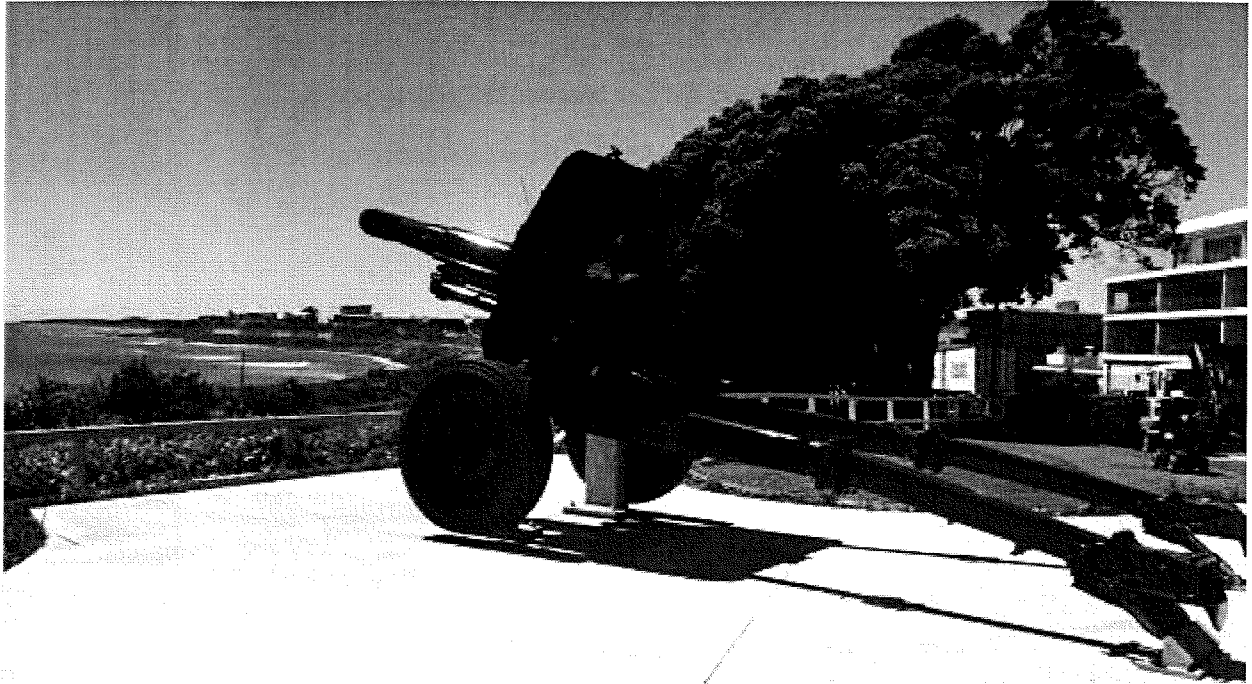
There will be an official dedication ceremony for the placement of the Pack Howitzer on Saturday at 10am.

This will take place opposite the New Plymouth Cenotaph.

Booming addition to New Plymouth's waterfront

JEREMY WILKINSON

Last updated 15:37, November 6 2015



Jeremy Wilkinson

The recently restored pack Howitzer used to sit outside the Strandon RSA club rooms.

A new addition to New Plymouth's waterfront will get a fitting welcome on Saturday morning.

An Italian made Pack Howitzer, used by New Zealanders in the Vietnam War, was emplaced across the road from the Cenotaph on Regina Place on Friday morning.

The relocation of the gun was a joint project by the New Plymouth District Council and New Plymouth RSA.

The historic piece of artillery spent 18 years outside the RSA's Strandon clubroom before being placed into storage six years ago.

RSA president Graeme Lowe said the howitzer was taken to Trentham army base for restoration after many years exposed to the elements.

"It was starting to look like a piece of scrap metal," he said.

"Now it's pretty much good as new."

Lowe estimates that of the 3000 total soldiers New Zealand sent to Vietnam, there were roughly 100 veterans from the Taranaki region still alive today.

"It's hard to get an exact number because lots of the soldiers who come back to New Zealand don't necessarily go back to their home turf," he said.

Mayor Andrew Judd said it was appropriate to have the howitzer on display near the Cenotaph as a memorial to those New Zealanders who never returned from the war.

"The gun will remind us of how some of our soldiers fought – and how some of them died," he said.

When used in action the howitzer was crewed by seven to eight men and could fire a 105mm shell up to 10.5 kilometres.

New Zealand joined the Vietnam War in July 1965 when it sent over the 161 Battery of the Royal New Zealand Artillery.

Over the course of the war 37 New Zealanders lost their lives and 187 were wounded.

An official ceremony will be held for the Howitzer at 10am on Saturday October 7.