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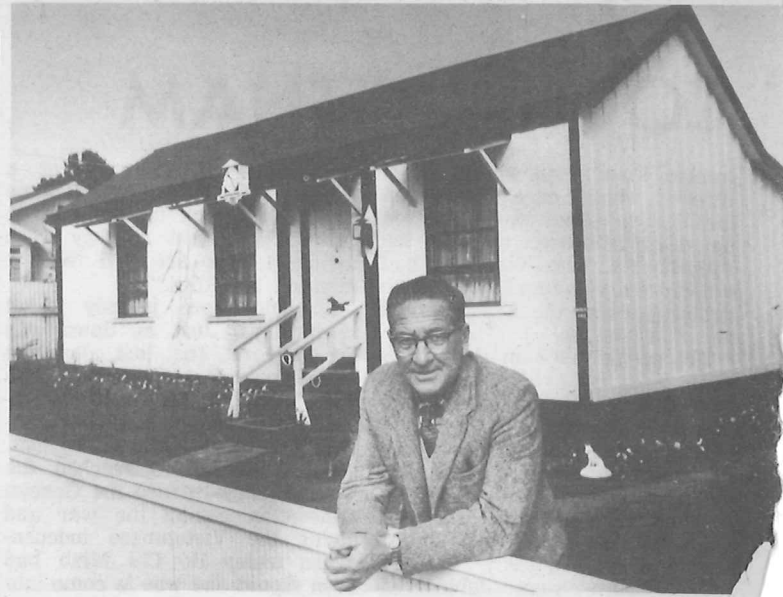
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Mr Baldock leans on his front fence outside his 106-year-old cottage. One horseshoe on the rise of the front steps, another between the left and centre windows, and the door plaque recall the cottage's association with regimental horses in the Maori Wars. These, with the lantern by the door and the clock at roof level, are among Mr Baldock's colourful additions. As the locals say, "You can't miss it!"

A backward step of 100 years

BY STAFF WRITER BEATRICE YOUNG

A FLUFFY black cat sat washing itself in the sun in front of the little white-painted cottage. The only sound was the occasional swish of a car a block away on the main New Plymouth road; but step back over 100 years to when this cottage was built in the uneasy days following the outbreak of the Maori War of 1860. Then the sights and sounds could have been of cavalry horses and Maori muskets.

When I asked for directions to the cottage I was told, "The house with the clock — you can't miss it."

The clock above the front door does catch the eye, but . . . then you notice the glossy black plaque of a horse on the door and the two small notices — one on the house and another on an adjoining tree. They refer to the cottage's origin and its association with two famous regiments, the 57th (West Middlesex) and 40th (2nd Somerset). At the side of the house set in the immaculate lawn rose a white flagstaff.

The cottage was built in 1863 as living quarters for the farriers of the 57th — non-commissioned officers in charge of the regiment's horses.

Three years earlier, Farrier-Sergeant Richards, of the 40th Regiment, with 20 men from the outpost of Fort Niger had formed

a guard about the site where the cottage was later built. Across the Henui River close by were the ruins of the Henui village burnt by the Maoris. The 57th arrived from Bombay at the beginning of 1861. These were the "Die-hards" whose battle honours of Albuhera, gained in the Peninsula War, were engraved on their buttons. Men from this regiment lived in the cottage.

Its present owner, Mr W. J. Baldock, who has named it Albuhera Cottage, is a retired plasterer and bootmaker. The history of the place is his absorbing interest and one he happily shares with visitors. He has even had busloads of schoolchildren on sight-seeing tours.

Mr Baldock met me at the gate. One of my first questions was about the clock. He smiled and admitted it had something of a history but not associated with the cottage. He had first erected it at the side of his house, but had taken it down for a time. After numerous requests, largely from people who had relied on it, he re-erected it at the front, "but before I tell you more, come and see," he said and led me to his back porch.

A massive, irregularly shaped wooden post stood there, covered with signatures — a treasured memento for Mr Baldock, part
N.Z.W.W. DECEMBER 1, 1969



Mr Baldock holds an old Enfield bayonet unearthed on his property and indicates its original length. Note the regimental buttons below the picture to the right of the clock, all dug up in his garden. Photographs to the left of the clock show New Plymouth's old post-office tower being demolished, and Mr Baldock standing by his treasured length of flagpole.



Mr Baldock indicates the site of his cottage on an early town plan.

of the flagstaff from the top of the old post office clock tower, a landmark for decades at New Plymouth. When the old building and tower were demolished to make way for new buildings he acquired his treasure, but the top was broken when it was removed. Mr Baldock and an active body of residents had campaigned for years to retain the tower. The signatures were of fellow supporters.

The clock now on Mr Baldock's cottage has a face which duplicates that of the old post office clock. "The weather doesn't worry it," he said proudly. "It even survived a cyclone which took a roof off over the street!"

Through the back door of Mr Baldock's cottage and we were asked to pause again to look at an uncarpeted oblong of floor, a repair made to the cottage but out of an historic 4in thick door of the Marsland Hill barracks, dismantled in 1891. The 8ft by 4ft door came to the little cottage. Part of the old barracks formed the old hostel building at North Egmont.

We were shown into a tiny room where Mr Baldock has a store of information on his cottage, its surroundings and the history of the two regiments. Maps, newspaper cuttings, drawings, old photographs and books are part of the collection. "Look," he says, as he unfolds an old map. "There," he points, "that's the cottage." Clearly marked on a street plan of the fledgling town of New Plymouth is 11a, the number of the

site. "Now this," he points to an illustration, "this was William Odgers from Fort Niger. He won a Victoria Cross at the battle of Waireka in March, 1860." He authenticates the facts with newspaper cuttings of the time.

When Mr Baldock first bought the cottage its site was overgrown with grass. Now it is immaculately kept with smooth lawn and flourishing garden. In the course of his gardening, relics of the cottage's earlier life have been unearthed, including numerous horse shoes, regimental buttons of both the 40th and the 57th Regiments and the old bayonet of an Enfield rifle. The buttons and bayonet are displayed on Mr Baldock's walls.

He has lived with his wife and family in the cottage since 1932. The interior is like any other suburban home. It is only on the outside that the construction gives a clue to the age of the house. The paintwork sparkles but the cottage has the upright narrow timbers seen in early wooden houses. It is probable that the roof has been replaced and at some time in the history of the cottage, additions have been made at the back.

Before I left, Mr Baldock obligingly raised the flag on his flagstaff. The fluffy black cat, its toilet completed, sat on the edge of a small, ornamented pool. It was ineffectually trying to catch some quite unalarmed goldfish. "Old, unhappy, far off things and battles long ago" seemed far removed from the little suburban home. ●



Mr Baldock raises the Union Jack on his flagpole. He is meticulous about detail and we have to remember that New Zealand had no flag of its own until after the passing of the Colonial Naval Defence Act, 1865, but used the Union Jack for all occasions ashore. As the farriers' cottage was built in 1863, the Jack would be in keeping.