

Ordnance, Taranaki New Plymouth,
5th June, 1855.

Sir,—

In accordance with Brigade Order dated Auckland the 11th May last, directing me to proceed on board the steam ship "Nelson" on special service to Taranaki to report whether accommodation of any kind for a certain strength of troops (as per margin) could be obtained at that Settlement, and if so on what terms and conditions.

I beg to state that I therefore embarked on board that vessel at Manukau on Monday evening the 14th, and landed at Taranaki on the 24th ultimo.

I have now the honour to request that you will be pleased to lay before his Excellency the Colonel commanding the forces the following statement of the steps that I have taken since arrival here to carry out such part of my instructions as have reference to the accommodation of the troops.

As soon as possible after my arrival I waited on His Honor the Superintendent, the Police Magistrate, and other gentlemen, whom I considered most likely to be acquainted with the extent of accommodation to be obtained in this Settlement, who have all rendered me the greatest assistance in acquiring such information. I find that the officers will not experience any difficulty in obtaining quarters in small houses (although not of the first class) in different parts of the town, but I have not been able to obtain any accommodation suitable for soldiers barracks at present vacant.

These cottages are widely separated and are very small, the average rates would be from £30 to £40 per annum.

I also made enquiry about an iron store not yet erected, of which I find the proprietor is willing to dispose, in consequence of the purpose for which it was imported not having been carried out at the original cost and expenses attending its purchase and transport from Sydney to this station, amounting in the whole to six hundred pounds.

This building is 63 x 31 x 12 feet and will be guaranteed complete in all respects, the timber for flooring has also been cut and will be supplied at the market rates.

A plan of building has already been prepared and now enclosed which I have promised to return to the proprietor should his offer not be accepted.

I think as a temporary measure this building would accommodate from 80 to 90 men.

I waited on the Rev. Mr. Turton Wesleyan Minister, in charge of the "Grey Institution" situated on an eminence on the Omata road about a mile south of the town; that gentleman not only shewed me politely over the buildings but also afforded me much valuable information respecting the resources of the Province of New Plymouth.

This building will I imagine, accommodate from 90 to 100 men, it will however require additional cooking places and other out-houses, there is an abundance of good pure water on the premises, and firewood in the immediate vicinity.

The park surrounding this establishment will be given up to the troops for the purpose of exercise or amusement.

I thence visited the Colonial Hospital which I found fitted up with every convenience in point of accommodation, for from 40 to 50 men, there is a sufficiency of cook and wash houses, and other out-buildings for such a force.

A well yielding an ample supply of excellent water is on the premises, and firewood to be obtained at a short distance; this building is on the Devon road, about a mile north of the town.

If His Excellency should approve this arrangement, the average detail might be as follows:—

Iron Store	-	-	-	-	85	Men.
Grey Institution	-	-	-	-	95	"
Hospital	-	-	-	-	45	"
				Total	-	225

And when allowance for the men on guard and officers servants be made, I consider that should the above estimates have been overrated that there will still be ample space for the force.

Having called on the Police Magistrate that officer at my request showed me the cells, one of which would afford ample accommodation for the stowage of the ammunition, it is about 12 x 14 feet.

The building is of stone with a shingled roof and surrounded with wooden houses I would therefore suggest that the roof and other exposed wooden parts be covered with green hide or zinc; and also that hides or wad missils be sent for the purpose of covering the floor of the cell and passage, it being fastened with iron nails.

With respect to a guard house for the cell, I would beg to suggest that a tent be pitched within the boundary wall, by which it will be quite sheltered.

I would also recommend that a few tents be sent for the use of the guards and picquets.

In reference to hospital accommodation a house similar to those suggested for the officers might be obtained, but as I had no authority to make final arrangements parties possessing houses would not guarantee their non-occupancy, but I do not anticipate any difficulty in obtaining such a house when required.

2 captains
4 subalterns
1 assistant surgeon
8 sergeants
2 drummers
200 rank and file.