



*A Nation Wins its Spurs: Military
Performances and National
Identity in New Zealand's Royal
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Abstract: Early royal visits to New Zealand were episodes of intense symbolic activity. These events are generally understood as affirmations of British identity. However, this article shows how the tours of 1901, 1920, and 1927 were also used to promote the country's distinct character. It examines the visits' military narrative, showing how rhetoric and performances cast Pākehā (New Zealanders of British descent) as a martial people who combined patriotism and vigour. Continuity with British fighting traditions was portrayed as a human timeline: a carefully organised sequence of veterans, recently returned soldiers, and new recruits. Uniquely colonial attributes were epitomised by unorthodox military heroes such as the Rough Rider and the Digger. In the aftermath of World War I, when the British world seemed to need replenishment, the dominion's special character was symbolised by young New Zealanders. Conventional military reviews were superseded by massed displays by school children, as military performances for visiting royals began to favour images of rebirth and rejuvenation.

Keywords: New Zealand, royal visit, national identity, military performance

New Zealand hosted royal tours in 1901, 1920, and 1927.¹ As public spectacles, they were larger than any previous events and, for many people, they helped to articulate the nation's short history. The visits prompted bursts of symbolic activity as well as bouts of reflection. Itineraries were meticulously planned, with many decisions taken at the highest levels of government. Public engagements attracted record crowds and unprecedented press coverage. Streets were decorated and photographed, and specially produced souvenirs entered countless collections.

Although they have left a large and diverse archive, the three visits have not been comprehensively examined by scholars of New Zealand history. Judith Bassett provides an insightful analysis of the 1901 tour in her 1987 article "A Thousand Miles of Loyalty." She describes how New Zealanders used the visit to project a flattering self-image.² More recently, David Colquhoun's "Royal Scenes from the Empire City" presents an engaging account of the Prince of Wales' sometimes rowdy reception in 1920. Like Bassett, Colquhoun recognises

¹ The Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York (the future King George V and Queen Mary) visited 11-28 June 1901. The Prince of Wales (the future King Edward VIII) visited 24 April to 22 May 1920. The Duke and Duchess of York (the future King George VI and Queen Elizabeth) visited 22 February to 22 March 1927.

² J. Bassett, "A Thousand Miles of Loyalty: The Royal Tour of 1920," in *The New Zealand Journal of History* 21, no. 1 (1987): 125-138.

“glimmerings of a new national consciousness” in the festivities.³ However, key texts on New Zealand nationalism make few if any references to these early royal tours.⁴

This oversight helps to sustain the perception that royal receptions were seldom more than obsequious displays of loyalty to king and empire. However, close inspection of the historical record reveals a much more complex phenomenon. Successive governments used the tours to promote a distinctive image of New Zealand to domestic and overseas audiences. Focusing on military themes, this article shows how royal visit decorations and performances helped to construct a unique identity for Pākehā (New Zealanders of European descent), setting them apart from fellow Britons elsewhere in the empire.⁵

In 1901, 1920, and again in 1927, claims were made about the New Zealanders' prowess on the battlefield. The nation's martial spirit was said to have been inherited from the motherland, so loyalty and bravery signalled continuity with British military traditions. However, the visits' military narrative also drew attention to the supposedly unique traits of New Zealand's armed forces. Both positive and negative, these attributes set the country's volunteers and territorials apart from professional soldiers in the British Army.

The British Army began to withdraw from New Zealand during the mid 1860s, when the colony took full responsibility for its internal security. From this time on, defence policy relied heavily on local militias. In the North Island, these waged a series of military campaigns against Māori in what are now termed the New Zealand Wars. Hostilities petered out in the early 1870s, but volunteers continued to serve as the mainstay of New Zealand's armed forces until the early twentieth century.⁶ Around 1910, volunteer companies were replaced by part-time territorials.⁷ This substitution followed similar reforms in Britain. It created a more cohesive national army with standardised equipment and improved fighting capability. In New Zealand, the transformation was assisted by the introduction of compulsory military training.⁸ During World War I, conscription and mass mobilisation accelerated the modernisation of New Zealand's armed forces.⁹

³ David Colquhoun, “Royal Scenes from the Empire City: The Prince of Wales in Wellington, 7-9 May 1920,” *Turnbull Library Record* 41 (2009): 30.

⁴ I refer specifically to Keith Sinclair's *A Destiny Apart* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), James Belich's *Paradise Reforged* (Auckland: Penguin, 2001), and Ron Palenski's *The Making of New Zealanders* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2012).

⁵ The Māori word Pākehā is both a noun and an adjective. It was originally used to identify English-speaking Europeans. In this article, it refers to a non-Māori British New Zealander. Elsewhere, I have examined how Pākehā employed Māori imagery to construct a favourable image of themselves as the benign custodians of indigenous interests. See Christopher McDonald *Ephemeral Architecture of New Zealand's 'Better Britons'* (PhD thesis, University of New South Wales, 2016), and Christopher McDonald “Britons in Maoriland,” in *Cultural Politics of Nationalism*, ed. Rachel Tsang and Eric Taylor Woods (London: Routledge, 2014), 171-196.

⁶ Peter Cooke and John Crawford, *The Territorials: The History of the Territorial and Volunteer Forces of New Zealand* (Auckland: Random House, 2011), 62-63, 73; and C. Wilcox, “Australians in the wars in Sudan and South Africa,” in *Before the Anzac Dawn. A military history of Australia to 1915*, ed. C. Stockings and J. Connor (Sydney: New South Publishing/UNSW Press, 2013), 208.

⁷ Cooke and Crawford, *The Territorials*, 153-162.

⁸ C. Wilcox, “Edwardian transformation,” in *Before the Anzac Dawn*, 267.

⁹ J. Crawford, untitled, in *Oxford Companion to New Zealand Military History*, ed. I. McGibbon (Auckland: Penguin, 2000), 566-571.

New Zealand's military campaigns abroad created two emblematic colonial figures. The third and fourth contingents of mounted riflemen sent to South Africa during the South African War (1899-1901) were called Rough Riders because they received little training.¹⁰ In embroidered stories of victories on the veld, these men epitomised resourcefulness and determination: attributes that Pākehā New Zealanders associated with the pioneering spirit of the first British settlers. During World War I, New Zealand soldiers became known as Diggers, after the dominion's Pioneer Battalion acquired a reputation for digging trenches and tunnels on the Somme battlefield.¹¹ The name was later adopted by Australian soldiers and, following demobilisation, it remained in circulation in both countries. In post-war years, Digger signified a returned soldier whose fortitude and sense of camaraderie had been honed by frontline action in Europe.¹²

There is one other unique character in the military narrative that accompanied New Zealand's royal visits: the school military cadet. The cadet system provided physical education and basic military training to boys in state-operated schools in Australia and New Zealand. Although English public schools were the first to adopt such methods, the system evolved independently in the two colonies. Moreover, state sponsorship meant that antipodean cadets were far more numerous than their counterparts at Home. Initially the system was voluntary. However, in 1900, cadet training became compulsory in New Zealand for all boys aged twelve and over. Participation waned during World War I, partly because the programme lacked experienced trainers. The Junior Cadet system lapsed in 1919, but Senior Cadets continued to operate in New Zealand until the 1960s.¹³

With each successive royal visit, the military narrative was adjusted to reflect New Zealand's changing circumstances, principally the country's fluid relationship with Britain and the empire. In the first quarter of the twentieth century, New Zealand began to engage with other nations as an independent state rather than a British colony. This transformation was bracketed by two seminal events. In 1901, Australian federation disrupted the Tasman World and forced New Zealanders to imagine a new strategic environment for themselves in the South Pacific.¹⁴ In 1926, the Balfour Declaration began the formal dissolution of the British Empire.¹⁵ During the intervening years, New Zealand's bilateral ties with Britain remained strong. However, imperial

¹⁰ Jock Phillips, "South African War," *Te Ara: The Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/south-african-war/print>, accessed 19 August 2017.

¹¹ Chris Pugsley, *Two Centuries of New Zealand at War* (Auckland: David Bateman, 1996), 126.

¹² The change in terminology helped to create a more inclusive military narrative. Whereas the Rough Rider was a distinctly Pākehā figure, the Digger was racially ambiguous.

¹³ Sinclair, *A Destiny Apart*, 229; and Craig Stockings, "Australia's Boy Soldiers: The Army Cadet Unit," in *Before the Anzac Dawn*, 174-203.

¹⁴ The term "Tasman World" refers to the close association that existed between New Zealand and the Australian colonies prior to Australian federation in 1901. See P. Mein Smith, "The Tasman World," in *The New Oxford History of New Zealand*, ed. G. Byrnes (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2009), 297-319.

¹⁵ The Balfour Declaration was formulated by the leaders of British and Dominion governments at the 1926 Imperial Conference in London. The agreement took its name from Arthur Balfour, a former British Prime Minister who chaired the Inter-Imperial Relations Committee. The declaration identified principles for establishing the political and diplomatic independence of British dominions. These became law in 1931, when the British Parliament passed the Statute of Westminster. See Malcolm McKinnon, "New Zealand in the World," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand*, ed. K. Sinclair (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1990), 245; and Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, 246.

connections weakened, as legal bonds were superseded by shared interests and affinities within a loosely defined commonwealth of independent nations.

The 1901 Visit of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York

The 1901 tour of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York (the future King George V and Queen Mary) occurred during an era that historian David Hamer has called “the beginning of ‘modern’ New Zealand.”¹⁶ It was a time of growing prosperity, when burgeoning trade in wool, mutton and cheese gave Pākehā New Zealanders one of the highest living standards in the world.¹⁷ The country’s populist premier, Richard Seddon, liked to remind his constituents of their good fortune by referring to New Zealand as God’s Own Country.¹⁸

However, New Zealand’s mettle was being tested by the South African War. When fighting broke out in 1899,¹⁹ Britain’s campaign against the Boers gave New Zealanders their first taste of military adventure abroad. After London issued a call to arms, Seddon’s government responded with gusto. New Zealand troops arrived at the Cape before their Australian counterparts and, by the war’s end, New Zealand claimed to have supplied proportionately more soldiers than any other British possession.²⁰ This distinction prompted the colony’s governor,²¹ Lord Ranfurly, to boast that the South African War had produced a “wave of loyalty” and laid the foundations for New Zealand’s own military traditions.²²

Although Ranfurly’s claim was exaggerated, the South African War did prove the strategic value of Britain’s possessions. In response, colonial statesmen sought a louder voice in imperial affairs. The 1901 royal visit was a convenient opportunity to petition London with this demand. Rehearsing arguments that were made more vehemently after the Great War, Seddon held that New Zealand’s contribution to South Africa entitled the colony to a more equal partnership with the mother country.²³

In consequence, a martial spirit infused receptions for the royal visitors. Military reviews were staged in Auckland and Christchurch. The second of these was designed to match the scale of similar events in Australia. Drawing soldiers and cadets from all over the country, it amassed 11,500 military personnel in Hagley Park and gave substance to Seddon’s claim that the colony could raise 50,000 men to fight in the King’s cause (Figure 1).²⁴ Reading the display as an ardent

¹⁶ David Hamer, “Centralisation and Nationalism,” in *The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand*, 125.

¹⁷ Hamer, “Centralisation and Nationalism,” 131.

¹⁸ Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, 39, 43; Hamer, “Centralisation and Nationalism,” 126; Michael King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 2003), 237-238, 259-265; and Sinclair, *A Destiny Apart*, 72.

¹⁹ King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, 285.

²⁰ New Zealand sent approximately 6,500 men to South Africa, though many of them arrived too late to see much action. See Phillips, “South African War: New Zealand’s contribution,” *Te Ara: the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*; Hamer, “Centralisation and Nationalism,” 147; and King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, 285-286.

²¹ Prior to 1917, New Zealand had a Governor rather than a Governor-General.

²² Ranfurly, *New Zealand Notes (1) 1897-1901*, Alexander Turnbull Library, manuscript, MSX-4950, 22 December 1900, Item 4.

²³ “Government Address and H.R.H. Duke of Cornwall & York’s Reply,” *Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives* (1902), 1-2.

²⁴ *Evening Post*, 21 June 1901, 2; and *Evening Post*, 25 May 1901, 5.

declaration of patriotism, London's *The Graphic* described the Christchurch review as "An Echo of Empire."²⁵



Figure 1: Duke of Cornwall and York presenting war medals, Hagley Park, Christchurch. Royal tour 1901. Ref: PA1-f-064-47-1. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand

Another show of force was made during the royal party's state entry into Wellington, New Zealand's capital (Figure 2). Disregarding the Duke's request for a modest escort, the New Zealand Government provided a body guard of almost 1,000 mounted troopers.²⁶ City streets were lined with volunteers and high-school military cadets. They joined the end of the procession

²⁵ F. D. Thompson, *Scrapbook*, ATL, manuscript, MSZ-1418.

²⁶ *Evening Post*, 27 April 1901, 5; *Evening Post*, 6 June 1901, 6; *Evening Post*, 18 June 1901, 5; and *Programme of Celebrations during the Visit of Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York from 11th June to 28th June 1901*, ATL, ephemera, pam. 1901, NZR 2496, 4.

and brought the total number on parade to almost 5,000. This was the largest military display ever staged in the diminutive capital.²⁷



Figure 2: The Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York passing under Government Arch, Lambton Quay, Wellington. Wilson, Kenneth Adrian, fl. 1983: Photographs relating to Wellington. Ref: 1/2-136016-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

These spectacles were more than demonstrations of defence capability. They also modelled the transmission of military values and traditions. In each location, this lineage was expressed as a human timeline composed of veterans, returned troopers, volunteers, and cadets. During Wellington's entry procession, the spatial relationship among these four groups expressed the colonists' ability to pass on a martial spirit inherited from the motherland. Accordingly, 300 veterans provided an honour guard on Queens Wharf, site of the Duke and Duchess's landing. At the base of the wharf, old soldiers yielded their position to troopers recently returned from South Africa.²⁸ Volunteers were next in the sequence. Lining city streets and bringing up the rear of the procession, they represented the colony's untapped fighting potential.²⁹

²⁷ New Zealand's 1901 Census records 50,000 people living in Wellington city and its suburbs. *Evening Post*, 17 June 1901, 5; and *Evening Post*, 18 June 1901, 5.

²⁸ *Evening Post*, 18 June 1901, 5.

²⁹ *Evening Post*, 1 June 1901, 5.

The final stage of the timeline spoke of future conflicts. “[Military cadets] from the public schools” guarded the approach to Government House, and “boy buglers” sounded a salute as the royal couple entered the grounds of the vice-regal residence. Watched by ranks of school children, Wellington’s “boy soldiers” demonstrated the perpetuity of British culture at the seat of imperial authority. To underscore this message, the Wellington College Rifles—composed of “old boys” from the capital’s leading secondary school—provided a guard of honour at the steps of Government House.³⁰

At the same time, military imagery drew attention to the distinctiveness of the colonial forces. For some commentators, New Zealand’s volunteer army appeared deficient. During the entry procession, the colonists’ drab khaki fatigues and mismatched equipment compared poorly with the splendid uniforms of British military officers travelling in the royal party.³¹ The *New Zealand Mail* offered a blunt assessment of rehearsals for the Auckland review, staged not on a parade ground but at the aptly named Potter’s Paddock: “It was impossible to look brave and brilliant careering around in the mud on an ungroomed horse, in a wet uniform.”³² Critics were more generous on the day of the review, when riders appeared “serviceable” but “poorly mounted” because the war had depleted the colony’s stock of good horses.³³

To the royal tourists, school military cadets were a charming novelty encountered only in Australia and New Zealand. The young trainees made quite an impression on the Duke, who later recommended the cadet system to the Secretary of State for War.³⁴ However, like New Zealand’s poorly organised volunteer companies, the boy soldier cut an ambiguous figure during military ceremonies. The *Oamaru Mail*³⁵ printed a scathing account of the cadets’ role in the Christchurch review:

The full measure of the ridiculousness of that proceeding can only be appreciated by the picturesque spectacle of a number of corps composed of small boys indifferently clad and minus arms marching past before Royalties as if a part of the military force of New Zealand.³⁶

The officially sanctioned reading of the cadets’ performance stressed the colonists’ determination to instil military traditions among New Zealand-born Britons. The *Mail*’s article presented a rival version of events with boys “playing at soldiers” in a vain attempt to exaggerate the size and capability of the colony’s armed forces. In this second construction, the whole Christchurch review risked becoming a parody. Similar ambiguities plagued the other military components of the visit. Along with praiseworthy exhibitions of discipline and loyalty, there were times when New Zealand’s volunteers appeared less committed, less practised and less well equipped than their professional counterparts in the Imperial Army.

A more flattering assessment of the ceremonies held that the colony’s volunteer troopers were superior to professional soldiers at Home. The simplest distinction involved physical stature: the New Zealanders were taller and sturdier than their counterparts in the British Army, a

³⁰ *Evening Post*, 18 June 1901, 5; and *New Zealand Mail*, 20 June 1901, 41.

³¹ *Evening Post*, 13 June 1901, 5.

³² *New Zealand Mail*, 13 June 1901, 32.

³³ *Evening Post*, 1 March 1901, 5; and *Evening Post*, 13 June 1901, 5.

³⁴ W. Maxwell, *With the “Ophir” Round the Empire* (London: Cassel, 1902), 99.

³⁵ Formerly published as the *Evening Mail*, the *Oamaru Mail* had a history of addressing contentious subjects.

³⁶ Reprinted in *Evening Post*, 13 June 1901, 5.

disparity that first became obvious when the two groups were deployed together in South Africa.³⁷ During the royal visit, the slight figure of the Duke of Cornwall and York drew public attention to the issue once again. One of the colony's racier journals depicted the Duke as "a timid, shrinking man" who looked "positively frightened" in large crowds.³⁸ Such comments were in marked contrast to descriptions of the colony's mounted volunteers. These portrayals stressed the rugged physicality of men and horses: "A fine lot of men they were—just one's idea of men fitted for rough work."³⁹ The *New Zealand Mail* used similar terms to describe Wellington's mounted escort as it set off along Jervois Quay:

[In] the immediate foreground were the lines of khaki-clad mounted men, well set up and handsome, their horses at the same time showing signs of the grievous splashing they had undergone in the military manoeuvres in the muddy streets all through the morning.⁴⁰

The condition of the horses revealed that the troops had practised their manoeuvres just hours earlier, and had been drilled not on a parade ground but on Wellington's unpaved streets. The *Mai's* image of mud-spattered mounts was at odds with the studied formality of the reception and the spit-and-polish aspirations of the army. However, it conjured up an appealing picture of capable young men who had acquired their riding skills on the farm and who had only just arrived in the colony's capital.⁴¹

Described in this way, the scenes that welcomed the Duke and Duchess to Wellington took on added meaning. The provisional nature of the military displays lost its derogatory associations and came to represent a distinct military tradition with its own strengths and values. If the volunteers' kit was sometimes incomplete, and if their execution of manoeuvres was less than perfect, these flaws merely emphasised that New Zealand's fighting force was drawn directly from the mainstream of colonial life.

In Wellington, claims about the colonists' loyalty and martial spirit were briefly put in jeopardy by a civil disturbance that involved several visiting volunteers. However, the ensuing "Newtown Park Scandal" also confirmed the emergence of distinct military traditions in New Zealand. During the Duke and Duchess's second evening in Wellington, a civilian protester paraded through the city's main streets carrying a sign which read "Newtown Park Commissariat!" Dangling from the placard were a bottle of tea and a sample of the underdone meat said to have been served to 850 volunteer soldiers camped at Newtown Park during Wellington's royal visit. The protester soon attracted a following, and "quite a procession was formed." This included four uniformed troopers who remained on the edge of the crowd but nevertheless gave authority to the complaint. Thus formed, the impromptu procession made its

³⁷ The disparity also became evident when imperial soldiers visited Wellington following Federation celebrations in Australia; see *Evening Post*, 9 February 1901, 5.

³⁸ *Observer* (New Zealand), 22 June 1901, 15.

³⁹ *Evening Post*, 18 June 1901, 5.

⁴⁰ *New Zealand Mail*, 20 June 1901, 40.

⁴¹ *New Zealand Mail*, 20 June 1901, 24; Rabel states that "the Boer War confirmed a stereotype of colonial masculinity." See R. Rabel, "New Zealand's Wars," in *New Oxford History of New Zealand*, 249; and J. Phillips, "War and National Identity," in *Culture and Identity in New Zealand*, eds. D. Novitz and B. Wilmott (Wellington: GP Books, 1989), 99-109.

way noisily around Government House while, inside the building, the royal party prepared for dinner.⁴²

News of the protest soon reached Colonel Arthur Penton, a professional British officer who had been placed in command of New Zealand's forces.⁴³ He ordered a full parade at Newtown Park for ten o'clock the next morning. Addressing his men, Penton said the previous day's events had spoiled the royal visit and were "the most disgraceful thing that had happened [during the tour] in the whole of the colonies." He promised to make an example of those who had joined the protest, and he admonished his officers for ignoring the men's grievances.⁴⁴

Public opinion quickly rallied in support of the volunteers. Press reports described Newtown Park as a "sea of mud" which provided "all the discomforts of an actual campaign without the excitement." Poorly organised catering contracts were blamed for causing men to go hungry and eat off dirty dishes. Criticism centred on Penton, and stories surfaced about his posturing and officiousness during the royal visit.⁴⁵

Penton had already been the target of criticism. Some weeks earlier, an *Evening Post*⁴⁶ editorial had drawn attention to the colonel's unpopularity and recommended his replacement:

[It] has been made plain throughout that his Conservative Imperial training and regard for the traditions of the 'Service' have never permitted him to get in touch with the volunteers of this democratic State, and whatever his professional attainments, they have not compensated for his lack of sympathy and just appreciation of colonial character.⁴⁷

The Newtown Park Scandal thus prompted further reflection on the distinctive character of New Zealand's volunteers versus that of regular soldiers in the British Army. An article in the *Free Lance* observed: "The New Zealand volunteer is not a regular soldier. Nor is he likely to be disciplined by Colonel Penton or any Imperial officer into the tameness of being talked to as if he were a mere flunky." The *Free Lance* continued: "to be addressed in the offensive and insulting style adopted by the Commandant, is by no means an incentive to volunteering."⁴⁸

The Duke and Duchess made no public acknowledgement of the Newtown Park Scandal, and their private thoughts about the special character of colonial volunteers are unrecorded. However, by the end their month-long tour, the royal visitors were well acquainted with other aspects of New Zealand's military narrative. Before leaving the country, the Duke obliged his hosts by describing New Zealand as a stalwart ally ready to uphold British military traditions.

⁴² *Evening Post*, 20 June 1901, 5; and Lord Ranfurly, "Sixteenth Quarterly Report" (draft), in *Papers*, ATL, manuscript, MS-Papers-6357-03.

⁴³ It was customary for a senior British officer to take command of New Zealand's military. Colonel Arthur Penton—a Royal Artillery officer—assumed this role in 1896. See Cooke and Crawford, *The Territorials*, 101-108.

⁴⁴ *Evening Post*, 20 June 1901, 5.

⁴⁵ *Observer*, 29 June 1901, 2; *Evening Post*, 20 June 1901, 5; *Evening Post*, 28 June 1901, 7.

⁴⁶ In 1901, the *Evening Post* was Wellington's only daily newspaper. It claimed to be politically neutral and aimed to comment freely on the events of the day.

⁴⁷ *Evening Post*, 28 May 1901, 4.

⁴⁸ *Free Lance*, 29 June 1901, 8. The *Free Lance* was a Wellington-based weekly pictorial newspaper offering conservative coverage of mainstream news.

The 1920 Visit of the Prince of Wales

Military imagery featured prominently in all three royal visits, but it had particular force in the aftermath of the Great War. New Zealand sent almost 100,000 men to the European war, as volunteers or conscripts. This represented nine per cent of the colony's population, or nearly one-fifth of all those eligible to serve. Eighteen thousand died and 40,000 suffered injury or illness.⁴⁹ In 1920, the Prince of Wales' mission *Down Under* recognised the wartime sacrifices made by Australia and New Zealand. As a salve to the nations' grief, the prince carried an optimistic message about imperial solidarity and the dominions' growing stature in the world.⁵⁰ The war was credited with producing a "more solidly united" empire⁵¹ and, on his arrival in Auckland, the prince described the recent conflict as a rite of passage, during which New Zealand had "nobly won its spurs." As evidence of this new-found maturity, he drew attention to the country's independent representation at the Versailles Peace Conference and the League of Nations.⁵²

The Prince of Wales, later Edward VIII, was the eldest son of King George V and Queen Mary, who had visited New Zealand as the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York in 1901. The prince was a fitting emissary for the new imperial order because, like the dominions, he had come of age during the war.⁵³ His four years of military service had supposedly been a levelling experience, which transformed him into the "most popular young man of his times."⁵⁴ As a future king, the prince's common touch presaged a modernised monarchy,⁵⁵ and the new relationship between sovereign and subject mirrored increased parity between metropolitan Britain and its dominions.⁵⁶ In a royal travelogue, British journalist Everard Cotes drew attention to this symmetry:

[It] must be remembered that the idea of Empire as a union of sister nations ... is a young idea, as young as the Prince The Prince and his youth happily blend in the new partnership and the new prospect, making for all of us a very potential figure.⁵⁷

Ephemera produced for the royal visit depicted the Prince of Wales as both soldier and empire-builder. In Australia and New Zealand, these two entities merged in the persona of the Digger Prince, a distinctly colonial military figure that evoked the camaraderie and stoicism of

⁴⁹ Ministry for Culture and Heritage, "First World War by the numbers,"; <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/war/first-world-war-by-numbers/>, (), updated 7-Jun-2017; and Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, 95-108.

⁵⁰ H. R. H. Prince of Wales, "Speech at Government Luncheon Wellington Thursday May 6th, 1920," in *Visit of Prince of Wales Addresses of Welcome and Replies of His Royal Highness*, Archives New Zealand (Wellington), G48 23 P/13 (File B), 6; T. Aronson, *Royal Ambassadors. British Royalities in Southern Africa 1860-1947* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1975), 86; and *Evening Post*, 10 March 1920, 3.

⁵¹ *Evening Post*, 7 May 1920, 7.

⁵² Aronson, *Royal Ambassadors*, 80; Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, 246; M. McKinnon, "New Zealand in the World (1914-1951)," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand*, ed. K. Sinclair (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1990), 242, 245-246; and H. R. H. Prince of Wales, "Reply to Government Address. Auckland, 24 April 1920," in *Visit of Prince of Wales Addresses of Welcome Etc.*, ANZ (Wellington), G48 23 P/13 (File B).

⁵³ *Evening Post*, 5 May 1920, 9; and *Evening Post*, 8 May 1920, 4.

⁵⁴ *Evening Post*, 5 May 1920, 10; and *New Zealand Times*, 5 May 1920, 6.

⁵⁵ W. MacBeth, *The Prince's Visit* (Lyttelton: Lyttelton Times, 1920), 3.

⁵⁶ *N.Z. Truth*, 15 May 1920, 2.

⁵⁷ Everard Cotes, *Down Under with the Prince* (London: Methuen, 1921), 247.

trench warfare. Accordingly, the 1920 tour was presented as an opportunity for the prince to renew his acquaintance with the New Zealanders he had met on the front lines. London stipulated that returned soldiers should be placed front and centre at every destination.⁵⁸ As a result, the visit's definitive image was that of the prince in uniform greeting former comrades in arms. The scene was repeated up and down the country, on railway platforms and improvised parade grounds. It reinforced the notion that the prince left England with a ready-made appreciation of New Zealand's national character.

Earlier royal tourists were expected to acknowledge distinctive national traits. However, the Prince of Wales was the first member of the royal family to actually *assume* a local identity during his travels. In his role as heir to the throne, he became a Canadian, a New Zealander, and finally an Australian as he journeyed through the dominions. An editorial in the *Evening Post* commented on this new phenomenon: "Though one local patriotism must suffice for a subject, it is clear that it is not enough for a King, who should be an impartial embodiment of the patriotic aspirations of all his subjects."⁵⁹ The *Dominion* newspaper explored this theme at greater length:

[The Prince of Wales] is young. But he has already taken his stand with the new ideal of Empire, as it has emerged from the ferment of war. He has preached stoutly the co-equality of each part of the Empire as an independent nation, and as heir to the formal throne or hereditary presidency which unites them all, he goes to claim citizenship of each part.⁶⁰

Whereas a future King was once "merely a Britisher," the Prince of Wales became "inoculated" with the spirit of dominion nationalism at each port of call.⁶¹ The *Evening Post* concluded: "His breadth of mind and vision has warmly commended him to the British people wherever they are ... He seems to understand by intuition these Britons of Beyond."⁶²

In New Zealand, the prince's connection with the British diaspora was made conspicuous on 25 April, when he joined repatriated troops to mark the fifth anniversary of the Gallipoli landing. It was a solemn occasion, befitting the disastrous outcome of the Allies' Dardanelles campaign. Modelled on a soldier's funeral, the carefully scripted ceremony in the Auckland Town Hall was an attempt to standardise observance and transform "Anzac Day" into a truly national experience. This was a departure from Colonial Office policy, which identified 11 November—Armistice Day—as the preferred date for an "Imperial Holiday" honouring British war dead. So, the prince's participation in the Auckland service was especially significant. As the Digger Prince,

⁵⁸ Lionel Halsey, letter to Liverpool (undated copy), in *Visit of the Prince of Wales to New Zealand—1920 Addresses for Presentation—Part II*, 9, ANZ, IA1 13.362/25; Liverpool, telegram to Secretary of State, 19 January 1920, in *Visit of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales Letters and Telegrams in connection with the Royal Visit to New Zealand and Samoa—1920*, ANZ, G48/23 P/21; Liverpool, telegram to Grigg, 26 January 1920, in *Visit of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales Letters and Telegrams Etc.*, Archives New Zealand (Wellington), G48/23 P/21; Liverpool, memo to Allen, 29 January 1920, in *Visit of Prince of Wales Arrangements*, Archives New Zealand (Wellington), G48/23; Milner, telegram to Liverpool, 24 January 1920, in *Visit of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales Letters and Telegrams Etc.*, ANZ, G48/23 P/21.

⁵⁹ *Evening Post*, 30 January 1920, 6.

⁶⁰ *Dominion*, 5 May 1920, 8. In 1907, the *Dominion* began publication in Wellington as a morning daily. It distinguished itself from the *Evening Post* by offering a conservative perspective on events.

⁶¹ *Evening Post*, 30 January 1920, 6.

⁶² *Evening Post*, 6 May 1920, 7.

he gave authority to the new ritual and helped to establish Anzac Day as a uniquely antipodean commemorative event.⁶³

The Prince of Wales' New Zealand identity was properly conferred two weeks later at a ceremony in Wellington. In a telling reversal of traditional investitures, the prince was awarded life membership of the New Zealand Returned Soldiers' Association (NZRSA). Standing in Parliament's Legislative Council Chamber, the association's president pinned the prestigious Gold Badge to the prince's lapel, watched by an audience of government officials and invited guests.⁶⁴ The formalities took only a few minutes, but the imposing setting added gravitas to the event and appeared to give state sanction to the prince's metamorphosis.

Although the badge presentation was a sober affair, the prince's new character was distinctly casual. Anointed as the Digger Prince, the heir to the throne became a "Royal democrat" whose relaxed manner and progressive attitudes aligned well with dominion nationalism. In reality, the prince's democratic image was carefully managed by his staff at York House and by officials at the Colonial Office, and his private feelings were often at odds with his public appearance.⁶⁵ But, for many New Zealanders, the visit Down Under gave the prince an opportunity to practise his preferred style of royalty.

Elsewhere on the tour, military performances were unremarkable. The sheer number of reviews, inspections, and honour guards gave these events a formulaic quality.⁶⁶ None of the displays matched the scale or complexity of the Great Royal Military Review staged in Christchurch in 1901. After four years of war, the government had little appetite for massing large numbers of troops in one location. Moreover, there was not the same imperative to demonstrate New Zealand's military capability. The dominion's strategic value and the heroism of its young men had been amply proven on the battlefield.

However, the two visits were alike in one respect. In 1920, New Zealand's Defence Headquarters issued a detailed prescription for modest military reviews in major cities (Figure 3).⁶⁷ The parade order recreated the human timeline deployed in Wellington nineteen years

⁶³ N. Z. *School Journal Special Souvenir Edition* 24, no. 6 (July 1920), 188.

⁶⁴ *Evening Post*, 7 May 1920, 8; P. Fraser, telegram to Mayor of Wellington, 28 April 1920, in *Prince of Wales Visit 1920-Wellington*, 1-2, Archives New Zealand (Wellington), IA1 13/362/62; *Visit to New Zealand of His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales etc.*, 15, Alexander Turnbull Library, pam 1920 VIS 4218; S. J. Harrison, letter to Massey, 19 February 1920, in *Visits and Inspections-Visit of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales to New Zealand*, Archives New Zealand (Wellington), AD1 904 42/126; S. J. Harrison, letter to Massey, 20 February 1920, in *Visits and Inspections Etc.*, ANZ, AD1 904 42/126; J. Hislop, memo to Bell, 5 March 1920, in *Prince of Wales Visit 1920-Correspondence with Minister*, Archives New Zealand (Wellington), IA1 13/362/-; "Local and General," *Evening Post*, 3 March 1920, 6; Liverpool, letter to Massey, 19 February 1920, in *Visit of Prince of Wales Arrangements*, ANZ, G48/23; W. Massey, letter to Harrison, 5 February 1920, in *Visits and Inspections-Visit of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales to New Zealand*, ANZ, AD1/904 42/126.

⁶⁵ For the prince's unguarded opinion of New Zealand, see D. Colquhoun's "Royal Scenes from the Empire City: The Prince of Wales in Wellington, 7-9 May 1920," in *Turnbull Library Record*, 41, 2009, 12-33.

⁶⁶ *Free Lance*, 26 May 1920, 5; W. MacBeth, *The Prince's Visit* (Lyttelton: Lyttelton Times, 1920), 25; F. Bell, letter to Mayors of Towns (undated draft), in *Prince of Wales Visit 1920- Correspondence with Minister*, ANZ, IA1 13/362/; J. Sleeman, letter to Liverpool, 20 February 1920, 2, in *Visit of the Prince of Wales-Arrangements*, ANZ, G48/23; J. Sleeman, letter to Liverpool, 25 February 1920, in *Visit of the Prince of Wales- Programme*, Archives New Zealand (Wellington), G48/23 P/15; J. Sleeman, letter to Liverpool, 25 March 1920, in *Visit of the Prince of Wales-Programme*, 2-3, ANZ, G48/23 P/15; and J. Sleeman, "Preliminary Orders for the visit of His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales to New Zealand" (attachment B2), in *Visit of the Prince of Wales- Programme*, ANZ, G48/23 P/15.

⁶⁷ Sleeman, "Preliminary Orders" (attachment B2), in *Visit of the Prince of Wales- Programme*, ANZ, G48/23 P/15.

earlier. As viewed from the saluting base, the “order of sequence” ran from left to right across the parade ground. The series began with the veterans of earlier military campaigns. These elderly men were followed by sailors and soldiers who had recently returned from Europe. Next came members of the Army Nursing Service and the various women’s “auxiliaries” who had also served overseas.⁶⁸ Completing the parade were the “close columns” of New Zealand’s present and future fighting forces: companies of territorials and battalions of senior cadets.⁶⁹



Figure 3: Military review, Newtown Park, Wellington, during the visit of the Prince of Wales. Photograph taken by Guy. Grant, F J (Mr), fl. 1981: Photographs of the tour of the Prince of Wales in 1920 etc. Ref: PAColl-0362-15. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

As in 1901, the parade order conveyed a message about intergenerational succession and the persistent strength of the empire’s armed forces. Paraphrasing comments made by Seddon in 1901, the Prince of Wales obliged his hosts by underscoring the meaning of the displays:

⁶⁸ The 1920 tour was the first occasion on which women’s contributions to the war effort were systematically acknowledged. See Rabel, “New Zealand’s Wars,” 248.

⁶⁹ Sleeman, letter to Liverpool, 25 February 1920, in *Visit of the Prince of Wales—Programme*, ANZ, G48/23 P/15; J. Sleeman, letter to Liverpool, 28 February 1920, in *Visit of Prince of Wales, 1920—Correspondence other than with Imperial Government and Royal Household*, Archives New Zealand, G48/22 P/12; and F. Bell, letter to Liverpool, 1 March 1920, in *Visit of Prince of Wales, 1920—Correspondence other than with Imperial Government and Royal Household*, ANZ, G48/22 P/12.

The impression made upon me by those three generations, the old, the present, and the new, is very strong. In the older veterans, I recall the early struggles of the colony to spread British civilisation in the wild. In the veterans of the South African and European wars, Pākehā and Māori alike, I saw the great development of the Dominion as one of the bulwarks of British unity, freedom, and peace. In the cadets and the school children I read a splendid future, certain to be yours, if your children live up to the example of their fathers, who won, and made, and fought, to defend this lovely and fertile land.⁷⁰

The prince's reference to school children acknowledged the Children's Demonstrations that featured prominently in his itinerary (Figure 4).⁷¹ Children were a fixture in royal visits everywhere. Senior members of the royal family seldom arrived at a destination in state without hearing the national anthem sung by a massed choir of young voices. However, vast schools' displays—like those staged for the Prince of Wales—were considered typical of Australasia. In New Zealand, the prince's encounters with school children enjoyed parity with parades of returned servicemen. In small towns, the two groups stood together on railway platforms for whistle-stop receptions. In larger centres, demonstrations and reviews attracted larger crowds that other public engagements.⁷²



Figure 4: Children's demonstration for the Prince of Wales, Parliament Grounds, Wellington, 1920. Stewart, K A: Negatives of Wellington. Ref: 1/2-057604-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

⁷⁰ *Evening Post*, 6 May 1920, 8. Imperial military policy prevented Māori from serving as combatants in the South African War. However, Māori fought in World War I, most notably as members of the distinguished Māori Battalion. In 1920, the Battalion's war record was acknowledged by the Prince of Wales during his visit to Rotorua, a central North Island town that the N. Z. Government had styled as the "capital" of Maoridom. Elsewhere on the Prince's tour, Māori paraded together with their Pākehā comrades in arms, and the two groups were notionally indistinguishable during military ceremonies. See Roberto Rabel, "New Zealand's Wars," in *The New Oxford History of New Zealand*, 249, 252.

⁷¹ *Itinerary of Visit of Prince of Wales*, Alexander Turnbull Library, ephemera, A-ROYAL-1920; and *Visit to New Zealand of His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales etc.*, ATL, ephemera, pam 1920 VIS 4218.

⁷² Bell, letter to Mayors of Towns (undated draft), in *Prince of Wales Visit 1920: Correspondence with Minister*, ANZ, IA1 13/362/-.

Children's demonstrations were consciously modelled on military reviews. The *N.Z. School Journal* published a definitive account of Wellington's Children's Day, when 10,000 youngsters welcomed the prince in Parliament Grounds. Like local newspapers, the *Journal* used military terminology to describe the carefully choreographed performance. Children were "marshalled" in the streets around Parliament. They marched "in formation" behind colourful banners that bore the schools' insignias and mottos. Within the grounds, schools formed six "columns" and were "fallen in" with "a fair approach to military precision." The children were "armed" with paper flags and urged to keep these lowered until the signal for "flag drill" had been given.⁷³ The prince conducted an "inspection" of the "ranks." Boys and girls were ordered to "come to attention and salute" when he approached, then "stand at ease" after he had passed by.⁷⁴

Few children obeyed their instructions to the letter, so the military precision of these events was more imagined than real. Auckland's schoolchildren broke ranks and mobbed the prince's car.⁷⁵ In Wellington, the formations held their position. However, flags were thrown, and one grazed the prince's cheek.⁷⁶ Amid a "perfect deluge of applause," the massed choir was barely audible as it sang "God Save the King."⁷⁷

However, these lapses in discipline failed to undermine the powerful symbolism of the Children's Day spectacles. On the contrary, the demonstrations were acclaimed for combining practised manoeuvres with exuberant displays of loyalty. The contrast served an important trope in the discourse of royal visits: *both* discipline *and* dynamism were part of the New Zealanders' distinctive character. The performances were hailed as triumphs of organisation, whenever the children stood their ground or carried out complex exercises. At the same time, the events were scripted to include moments of spontaneity that attested to the children's health and vitality.⁷⁸

This dual character meant that the demonstrations were far more forgiving than real military reviews. There had always been questions about the parade-ground abilities of New Zealand's part-time army. In 1920, just two years after the war, New Zealand's territorial corps were depleted, ill-equipped, and poorly "officered." The appearance and demeanour of returned soldiers were even less predictable. Under the circumstances, Defence Headquarters opted for a series of undemanding static parades without arms, horses, or a march past.⁷⁹ Even so, Wellington's military display ended in farce. A temporary grandstand collapsed, causing spectators to invade the field. The prince managed to complete his inspection, but only because returned soldiers linked arms and kept the unruly crowd at bay.⁸⁰

⁷³ *Dominion*, 28 April 1920, 7; *Dominion*, 8 May 1920, 8; *N. Z. School Journal Special Souvenir Edition* 24, no. 6 (July 1920), 220-225.

⁷⁴ *Dominion*, 5 May 1920, 7; *Dominion*, 8 May 1920, 8; *Evening Post*, 28 April 1920, 8; *Evening Post*, 4 May 1920, 7; and *N. Z. School Journal Special Souvenir Edition* 24, no. 6 (July 1920), 207, 210.

⁷⁵ *Evening Post*, 27 April 1920, 8; and *N. Z. School Journal Special Souvenir Edition* 24, no. 6 (July 1920), 191.

⁷⁶ *Dominion*, 8 May 1920, 7.

⁷⁷ *N. Z. School Journal Special Souvenir Edition* 24, no. 6 (July 1920), 208.

⁷⁸ "*Dominion*, 27 April 1920, 7; *Evening Post*, 6 May 1920, 7; *Evening Post*, 8 May 1920, 6; and *Evening Post*, 11 May 1920, 6.

⁷⁹ James Sleeman, letter to Liverpool, 20 February 1920, in *Visit of Prince of Wales, 1920-Programme*, ANZ, G48/23 P/15.

⁸⁰ *Dominion*, 7 May 1920, 6, 7; and *Evening Post*, 7 May 1920, 7.

Compared with the reviews, children's gatherings were a more dependable way to model discipline and vigour. School children could be co-opted in large numbers, and coordinated movements were easily transferred from military drill to the massed demonstrations. This exchange helped to conflate idealised depictions of the New Zealand soldier with flattering images of the nation's school children. Like the romanticised figure of the "Rough Rider" in 1901, the nation's school children were described as "strong," "well-nourished," "red cheeked," and distinguished by their "fine appearance and bearing."⁸¹ The demonstrations had one further advantage: they allowed girls to feature more prominently in the military narrative. Typically, young women from the secondary schools were entrusted with the most complex synchronised movements.

The visitors endorsed the favourable assessment of young New Zealanders. Nationwide, more than 30,000 children toured H.M.S. *Renown*, the battleship that brought the Prince of Wales to New Zealand. To their Royal Navy hosts, these "bright-eyed and efficient" children were "the picture of health and happiness." The ship's magazine reported: "Never have such children been seen in Europe. There was not a weed or a degenerate among them." The children's countenance was all the more remarkable because they were not a favoured "selection from the various schools" but a representative cross section of society.⁸²

Images of children and soldiers converged, because depictions of war as a right-of-passage were closely aligned with portrayals of rebirth or rejuvenation. The interplay between these two ideas helped to shape New Zealand's identity in royal visit discourse. Like the notion of British dominions' coming of age, the theme of renewal was raised in London prior to the prince's departure. Referring to the empire as a "body" which was "exhausted" by war and prone to "disintegrating influences," the British Prime Minister predicted that the prince's recent visit to Canada and his forthcoming tour of Australasia would act as a "tonic" and would have a "consolidating, bracing, and reinvigorating effect upon the whole Empire."⁸³ This idea was echoed at the state luncheon for the prince in Wellington. Here, Prime Minister William Massey observed that New Zealanders often referred to Britain as "the old country" but never spoke of "the Old Empire." This was because the empire included "young and virile nations."⁸⁴

Significantly, Massey's prescription for restoring youthfulness and vigour to the British world looked not to the monarchy and the imperial centre but to "new countries" on the periphery.⁸⁵ In the aftermath of the Great War, Massey's implication was clear. As the youngest of Britain's dominions, New Zealand had an important part to play in maintaining Greater Britain's vitality.⁸⁶

Unlike his counterparts in Australia and Canada, New Zealand's prime minister was a reluctant participant in the process of devolution so heartily recommended by the prince. At the state lunch, Massey credited the recent conflict with producing a "more solidly united" empire,

⁸¹ *Evening Post*, 11 May 1920, 6; *Observer*, 24 April 1920, 2; and Cotes, *Down Under with the Prince*, 64; H. R. H. Prince of Wales, "Speech at Government Luncheon," 6, in *Visit of Prince of Wales*, G48/23 P/13.

⁸² *With the "Renown" in Australasia: The Magazine of H. M. S. "Renown," December, 1919, to October, 1920*, 140-141, Alexander Turnbull Library, publications, 394.4 WITH 1921136; and *Evening Post*, 11 May 1920, 6.

⁸³ *Evening Post*, 5 May 1920, 9.

⁸⁴ *Evening Post*, 7 May 1920, 7.

⁸⁵ *Evening Post*, 7 May 1920, 7.

⁸⁶ *Dominion*, 8 May 1920, 8.

but he made no mention of its metamorphosis into an association of independent nations.⁸⁷ In the years to come, Massey and his successors quietly resisted greater autonomy, preferring to maintain New Zealand's close association with Britain. This reticence helps to explain the powerful symbolism of the children's demonstrations. The events were carefully orchestrated to emphasise continued dependency between an enervated motherland and its vigorous young offspring.⁸⁸

The 1927 Visit of the Duke and Duchess of York

In 1927, New Zealand's place in the British world remained uncertain. At the behest of Canada, Ireland, and South Africa, Britain recognised the dominions as fully independent states. Henceforth, the mother country and her offspring would possess notionally equal status within a British Commonwealth of Nations. The new imperial order was formulated as the Balfour Declaration and later passed into British law as the 1931 Statute of Westminster. New Zealand's government continued to resist the reforms. It feared an erosion of the country's special relationship with Britain and further cuts to the Royal Navy's capability in the Pacific. For appearances' sake, Prime Minister Gordon Coates gave his consent to the declaration. However, the New Zealand Parliament did not ratify the Statute of Westminster until 1947.⁸⁹

As in 1920, devolution helped to shape royal-tour rhetoric. In December 1926, the Duke of York (the future George VI, younger brother of the Prince of Wales who had visited New Zealand in 1920) and the Earl of Balfour attended a Pilgrims Society dinner in London. Proposing a toast, Balfour linked the eponymous declaration with the Duke's coming visit to Australia and New Zealand. In Balfour's depiction of the new Commonwealth, dominions would be bound to the mother country by "common ideals" rather than legal controls. The "fabric" of empire would rest on a "moral, emotional base" and would therefore depend on "personal intercourse." Accordingly, the Duke's mission was to supply the "personal touch" that Balfour considered essential for maintaining unity in the new Commonwealth.⁹⁰

The words "personal touch" became a catch phrase for the 1927 tour. At every opportunity, the slogan was used to invoke a vague yet powerful force that operated on a personal level but somehow held the mighty British world together.⁹¹ Imperial authority was replaced by a kind of magic. As the Dominion Secretary put it, the Crown was a "mystic symbol of our unity." When the Duke and his wife the Duchess of York (the future Queen Elizabeth,

⁸⁷ *Evening Post*, 7 May 1920, 7.

⁸⁸ Australian researcher Simon Sleight presents a related argument in his analysis of children's performances during civic festivities in Melbourne, 1870 to 1914. According to Sleight, youthful performers in the 1901 Federation celebrations symbolised the nation and embodied "the aspirations of the infant Australian Commonwealth." See S. Sleight "For the Sake of Effect' Youth on Display and the Politics of Performance," in *History Australia* 6, no. 3 (2009), 71.1-71.22.

⁸⁹ The Balfour Declaration was also referred to as the "Balfour Definition." Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, 246; *Evening Post*, 22 February 1927, 10; King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, 318-9, 306; and Sinclair, *A Destiny Apart*, 102-103.

⁹⁰ *Evening Post*, 3 December 1926, 7.

⁹¹ Taylor Darbyshire, *The Royal Tour of the Duke and Duchess of York* (London: Edward Arnold, 1927), 111; *Dominion*, 21 February 1927, 6; *Evening Post*, 8 March 1927, 10; and New Zealand Government Publicity Office, *Royalty in New Zealand: Official Pictorial Souvenir of the Visit of Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of York* (Wellington: Government Printer, 1927), 75-76.

and Queen Mother) arrived in New Zealand, the *Evening Post* observed: “the Dominion is again under the spell of that personal touch.”⁹²

By this time, New Zealand had its own royal-tour traditions, and London was content to leave most arrangements to the dominion government. Officials in Wellington invoked recent precedent, using the Prince of Wales’ 1920 itinerary as a template for the 1927 tour. As a result, welcomes for the Duke and Duchess were largely a reprise of those held seven years earlier.⁹³

Nevertheless, there were some deliberate differences between the two programmes. The 1927 visit was labelled “less official” than that of the Prince of Wales.⁹⁴ British newspapers described the New Zealand sojourn as a “spell of delightful holidaymaking” before more serious public engagements in Australia.⁹⁵ This perception arose because the Duke’s only official duty was to open Australia’s new federal Parliament House building in Canberra.⁹⁶ However, the more relaxed style of the 1927 tour also suited Wellington officials. Through its new Publicity Office, the government used the royal visit to promote New Zealand tourism. Moreover, the seemingly casual encounters with ordinary citizens enabled the Duke and Duchess to summon the magic of their “personal touch.”⁹⁷

The military component of the 1927 tour was also starkly different from that of 1920. Whereas war provided the dominant motif for the Prince of Wales’ travels, martial imagery played a subdued role in receptions for the Duke and Duchess of York. Returned soldiers no longer appeared centre stage at every small-town mayoral welcome and, in the larger cities, military reviews were dropped from the programme altogether.⁹⁸ During his three-day stay in Wellington, the Duke encountered only one authentic military ceremony. Prior to the civic reception, he briefly inspected a guard of honour drawn up outside the Town Hall.⁹⁹

⁹² *Evening Post*, 8 December 1926, 9.

⁹³ Charles Fergusson, telegram to Clarendon (undated), in *Correspondence on the Visit to New Zealand of the Duke and Duchess of York, 1926-1927*, Archives New Zealand (Wellington), PM9/7; W. Downie Stewart, memo to Fergusson, 1 November 1926, in *Duke and Duchess of York Visit 1927–Itinerary–General File*, Archives New Zealand (Wellington), IA1 13/555/2.

⁹⁴ Charles Fergusson, letter to Coates, 12 July 1926, in *Correspondence on the visit*, Archives New Zealand (Wellington), PM9/7.

⁹⁵ *Evening Post*, 29 January 1927, 15; *Free Lance* (New Zealand), 16 March 1927, 23; and *Observer* (New Zealand), 23 February 1927, 4.

⁹⁶ In 1901 his father, the Duke of Cornwall and York, had opened the new Commonwealth of Australia’s first Federal Parliament, held in temporary quarters in Melbourne.

⁹⁷ *Evening Post*, 2 December 1926, 7.

⁹⁸ R. B. Smythe, letter to Day, 20 January 1927, in *Visits and Inspections–Visit–HRH [His Royal Highness] the Duke of York to NZ 1927–Military Arrangements*, Archives New Zealand (Wellington), AD1/904 42/151; R. B. Smythe, “Visit of Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of York to New Zealand–February–March, 1927 [amended]. Preliminary Provisional Instructions” (undated), in *Visits and Inspections Etc.*, Archives New Zealand (Wellington), AD1/904 42/151; R. B. Smythe, “Visit of Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of York to New Zealand–February–March, 1927. Amended Instructions. Etc.” (undated), in *Visits and Inspections Etc.*, ANZ, AD1/904 42/151; R. B. Smythe, “Notes on suggestions after discussion with GOC,” 15 November 1926, in *Visits and Inspections Etc.*, ANZ, AD1/904 42/151; and Young, letter to Fergusson, 17 January 1927, in *Visits and Inspections–Visit–HRH [His Royal Highness] the Duke of York to NZ 1927–Military Arrangements*, ANZ, AD1/904 42/151.

⁹⁹ *Dominion*, 3 March 1927, 12; *Evening Post*, 7 March 1927, 12; and F. G. Matthews, letter to Norman, 26 February 1927, in *Duke and Duchess of York–Visit of 1927–Wellington Part 1*, Archives New Zealand (Wellington), IA1 13/555/26.

Nevertheless, Wellington's tour programme affirmed national virtues by including two *quasi*-military performances among its royal receptions. These events promoted a now familiar theme: the perpetuation of British fighting traditions by a vigorous young nation on the empire's periphery. In each case, civilian actors executed displays of military skill. The resulting blend of artifice and ceremony produced a brighter version of the military narrative. Its romanticised images portrayed New Zealanders as a martial people, but did so without the triumphalism or stoic patriotism of earlier royal visits.

The Children's Gathering in Parliament Grounds mirrored that staged for the Prince of Wales. Ten thousand boys and girls formed ranks across the lawns, and 1,000 military cadets stood two-deep along the main driveway (Fig. 5).¹⁰⁰ The same attention to discipline and order was evident. If anything, the grounds' more mature landscape gave the later performance greater visual cohesion. As in 1920, this was coupled with animation when Wellington's children produced "bits of animated colour," a "forest of waving flags," and "billows of cheers."¹⁰¹ Indeed, comparison of the two events reveals a remarkable similarity between supposedly unscripted declarations of loyalty for the prince and seemingly spontaneous displays of affection for the Duke and Duchess. In each case, the momentary loss of restraint was as much part of the demonstration formula as the soldierly bearing of the children and the precise execution of parade ground drill.



Figure 5: Arrival of the Duke and Duchess of York, Parliament grounds, Wellington. Crown Studios Ltd.: Negatives and prints. Ref: 1/1-032525-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

However, the 1927 Gathering was different in certain respects. It was no longer referred to as a review. Instead, commentators used a range of expressions more suited to peacetime and

¹⁰⁰ Controller and Auditor General, memo to Hislop, 15 September 1927, in *Duke and Duchess of York—Visit of 1927—Subsidies*, Archives New Zealand (Wellington), IA1 13/555/47; *Dominion*, 9 March 1927, 11; *Evening Post*, 16 February 1927, 10; *Evening Post*, 7 March 1927, 12; G. L. Stewart, letter to Hislop, 8 February 1927, in *Duke and Duchess of York—Visit of 1927—Wellington Part 1*, ANZ, IA1 13/555/26.

¹⁰¹ *Dominion*, 9 March 1927, 11; and *Evening Post*, 8 March 1927, 10.

civilian life: “schools assembly,” “parade,” “pageant of youth,” and “great gymkhana.”¹⁰² The displays were also more varied. If space permitted, emphasis shifted from pseudo-military manoeuvres to physical education. Christchurch’s “Gathering” took place at the Addington Showgrounds. Here, the programme included “Swedish drill” and “community dancing” as well as the more conventional marching and “flag demonstrations.”¹⁰³

There was another conspicuous difference between the demonstrations staged for the Prince of Wales and the gatherings witnessed by the Duke and Duchess of York. In 1920, ad hoc parades of scouts and guides were hastily grafted onto other public events. In 1927, children’s gatherings were designed to foreground the activities of the scouting and guiding movements.¹⁰⁴ Wellington’s official programme actually gave precedence to scouts and guides in its description of the Children’s Day event. The entry for 8 March read simply: “Parade of Girl Guides and Boy Scouts at Parliament Buildings. Children’s gathering.”¹⁰⁵ Organisers of the Wellington rally hoped to make it the largest muster of scouts ever held in New Zealand. Between two and three thousand scouts and guides attended. They occupied a place of honour in the parliamentary forecourt, on either side of the official platform. Facing outwards towards the tidy rows of school children, girl guides and boy scouts stood as models before their peers.¹⁰⁶

As in 1920, the children can be seen as surrogates for their elders. Extrapolated to the population at large, the children’s discipline and coordination attested to shared British values, particularly the martial spirit that was said to infect national character. These qualities had once been epitomised in military performances. However, by 1927, the various “pageants of youth” provided the most compelling evidence of cultural conformity. In Wellington, this substitution—school groups for battalions, children for adults—was all the more persuasive for being staged in Parliament Grounds, New Zealand’s pre-eminent symbolic space. Here, the emblematic relationship between children and the nation was most apparent.

The demonstrations’ principal function was to express the persistence of British values and traditions. However, the children’s performances also supported claims about the distinctive health and vigour of young New Zealanders compared to their counterparts at Home. By setting these youngsters apart from their supposedly sickly metropolitan cousins, royal visit discourse helped to create a cohesive identity not just for children but for the dominion as a whole. Once again, the close symbolic relationship between children and soldiers showed how readily distinctive characteristics could be transferred from a juvenile population to an adult one and vice versa. The physical attributes that separated the dominion’s youth from that of the motherland were the same qualities that had distinguished colonial volunteers from British regulars in South Africa: health, stature, strength, and vigour.

¹⁰² R. F. Bollard, letter to Norwood, 12 November 1926, in *Duke & Duchess of York—Visit of 1927—Wellington Part 1*, ANZ, IA1 13/555/26; *Dominion*, 22 February 1927, 10; and *Free Lance*, 2 March 1927, 8; G. L. Stewart, letter to Hislop, 8 February 1927, in *Duke and Duchess of York Etc.*, ANZ, IA1 13/555/26.

¹⁰³ Darbyshire, *The Royal Tour*, 121; *Dominion*, 24 February 1927, 10; and *Evening Post*, 7 March 1927, 12.

¹⁰⁴ G. L. Stewart, letter to Hislop, 8 February 1927, in *Duke and Duchess of York Etc.*, ANZ, IA1 13/555/26.

¹⁰⁵ *Dominion*, 9 March 1927, 11; *Dominion*, 18 March 1927, 10; *Evening Post*, 17 March 1927, 10; and *Visit to New Zealand of their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of York. 22nd February to 22nd March, 1927* (Wellington: Government Printer, 1927), 10.

¹⁰⁶ *Dominion*, 9 March 1927, 11; *Evening Post*, 23 February 1927, 17; and G. L. O’Hara, report to Secretary of Wellington Education Board, 7 March 1927, in *Duke of York Papers Prior to Accession 1936 Australia/New Zealand Tour 1927. 93. NZ—Auckland—Westport. Australasian Tour 1927. Rotorua*, Royal Archives.

As the *Free Lance* confidently reported following a children's gathering on the Domain in Auckland: "the Duke will require no greater assurance of the virility, intelligence, and patriotism of the children of this young country than the pageant of youth."¹⁰⁷ Three weeks later, the same newspaper was no less forthright in its assessment of the gathering in Christchurch. Under a photograph of 1,600 identically dressed "senior scholars" performing physical drill at Addington Show Grounds, a caption states: "Christchurch School Children Prove to the Duke that we are a Young and Virile Race."¹⁰⁸ All young Britons were expected to be patriotic, but only those raised under the Southern Cross possessed the distinctive virility noted by the *Free Lance*.

Wellington's other military event was a Grand Naval and Military Tournament and Searchlight Tattoo at Newtown Park. This was public entertainment rather than an authentic display by the armed forces. The show combined elements from the Wembley and Aldershot tattoos of 1925. Uniforms, costumes, banners, and "effects" came directly from London, and these gave authority to the event despite the obvious theatricality of the performance. The show was brought to New Zealand by the National Defence League. Short seasons in Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch raised funds for the Citizens' Defence Forces.¹⁰⁹

"Educative–Historical–Romantic," the tattoo was described as the "combined endeavours of artistic civilian thought and regulated military achievement."¹¹⁰ Its hybrid character was evident among the 1700 "public-spirited" volunteers who participated in the show. Local territorials and senior cadets joined men from the Y.M.C.A. and members of city's musical societies to deliver acts from military and civilian genres.¹¹¹

Thrilling "skill-at-arms" competitions and parade-ground drill were mixed with elaborate human tableaux. Some items in the programme demonstrated the traditional arts of soldiering. For example, the Royal New Zealand Artillery performed an impressive "musical drive" by a battery of four guns. At other times, the "costumed presentation" drew its appeal from novelty or spectacle. For instance, men on horseback platted ribbons on a giant maypole, and a company of Mounted Rifles used lances to lift tent pegs from the ground.¹¹²

As its name suggests, the Searchlight Tattoo was designed to be staged after dark. During moments of intense drama, searchlights, flaming torches, and fireworks transformed Newtown Park into a "blaze of light and colour."¹¹³ However, the Duke and Duchess attended an abridged matinee performance, in which the illuminations were replaced by a different kind of spectacle. A Living Flag was created by 4,000 primary school pupils (Figure 6). Cloaked in patriotic red, white, and blue, the children marched from the side-lines to pre-assigned positions in the centre of the park. There, configured as a Union Jack, they sang—not quite in unison—two verses of *The Empire's Flag*. During this rendition, the children raised and lowered their capes to create the impression of a single undulating surface.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁷ *Free Lance*, 2 March 1927, 8.

¹⁰⁸ *Free Lance*, 23 March 1927, 34.

¹⁰⁹ Ernest Muir, letter to Department of Internal Affairs, 27 October 1926, in *Duke & Duchess of York—Visit of 1927—Wellington Part 1*, ANZ, IA1 13/555/26.

¹¹⁰ *Dominion*, 5 March 1927, 10; and *Free Lance*, 2 March 1927, 41.

¹¹¹ N. S. Falla, letter to Hislop, 11 January 1927 (enclosure), in *Duke and Duchess of York—Visit of 1927—Wellington Part 1*, ANZ, IA1 13/555/26.

¹¹² *Dominion*, 4 March 1927, 6; *Evening Post*, 4 March 1927, 6; and *Observer* (New Zealand), 19 January 1927, 10.

¹¹³ *Dominion*, 4 March 1927, 6.

¹¹⁴ *Dominion*, 8 March 1927, 11; *Evening Post*, 5 March 1927, 11; and *Evening Post*, 8 March 1927, 12.



Figure 6: Photograph of children forming a living flag, Newtown Park, Wellington, during the visit of the Duke and Duchess of York. Ref: PAColl-9399. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

The Union Flag was favoured for its geometric simplicity. Weeks earlier in Auckland, organisers abandoned attempts to form the more complex Living New Zealand Ensign.¹¹⁵ However, the British flag also had symbolic weight. If the children's energetic welcome denoted superior health and the physical benefits of life under the Southern Cross, the Jack signified that Wellington's children were no less British than their metropolitan counterparts. The lyrics of *The Empire's Flag* made a similar claim about unity and difference. Although few onlookers could have heard the words clearly, the song's refrain extended cultural solidarity from the Home nations to the whole British diaspora:

An English tongue its praise shall sing,
While Royal spirits call;
Nor Scot, Colonial, Kelt are we,
But Britons one and all.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ *Evening Post*, 23 February 1927, 10; *Evening Post*, 4 March 1927, 4.

¹¹⁶ *Evening Post*, 8 March 1927, 8.

Despite the fundraising and theatricality, the tattoo produced images and narratives like those of genuine military ceremonies during earlier royal tours. In doing so, the performance reminded New Zealanders that they were the “descendants of a valiant race with an age-long history.”¹¹⁷ However, Britain’s past was not the only history on display. Described as a “Pageant of Empire,”¹¹⁸ the tattoo inserted New Zealand into the final chapter of an “inspiring” military story:

[A] series of splendid spectacular scenes illustrating the glories of the past in Britain’s long history linked up with the present in many interesting displays of what this generation is doing to maintain the old tradition in a far-off outpost of Empire.¹¹⁹

During its opening scene, the tattoo celebrated an inter-generational *esprit de corps*, offering this as a rubric for New Zealand’s relationship with the motherland. Against the unvarying backdrop of fortress Britain, the passage of time was portrayed by a changing-of-the-guard ceremony. As the centuries elapsed, each detail of soldiers was relieved by counterparts from a subsequent era. So, Saxons relinquished their posts to Normans, and the soldiers of Cromwell gave way to those of the Duke of Marlborough and later those of the Duke of Wellington.¹²⁰

The sequence concluded with “our modern Territorials advancing and taking over with all formalities from the men who had guarded Britain so faithfully in the past.”¹²¹ In the final exchange, military traditions and responsibilities passed figuratively from the motherland to a new generation of Britons on the periphery of the empire. This modest adaptation of the Wembley script ensured that New Zealand was depicted as a defender of the empire and a trustworthy custodian of British culture.

Although the explicit rhetoric of 1920 was absent, the changing-of-the-guard scene vividly recalled Massey’s pronouncement at the state lunch for the Prince of Wales. While England’s long history and venerable traditions caused it to be known as the “Old Country,” the British Empire remained youthful because it included “young and virile nations” like New Zealand.¹²²

The Living Flag underscored this message by adding throngs of vigorous young Britons to the military spectacle. In doing so, the tattoo dramatized and extended the chronology found in the military displays of previous royal visits. Well-drilled primary school pupils joined the ranks of cadets, territorials, and professional soldiers from the permanent artillery corps. Outside the park’s gates, the Duke and Duchess were met by an informal honour guard of war veterans and returned servicemen. So, even without costumed actors representing “campaigners of the past,” the human timeline at Newtown Park offered a protracted record of loyalty and service.¹²³ More

¹¹⁷ Falla, letter to Hislop, 11 January 1927 (enclosure), in *Duke and Duchess of York Etc.*, ANZ, IA1 13/555/26.

¹¹⁸ *Evening Post*, 4 March 1927, 6.

¹¹⁹ *Evening Post*, 5 March 1927, 10.

¹²⁰ *Observer* (New Zealand), 19 January 1927, 10.

¹²¹ *Evening Post*, 4 March 1927, 6; and *Evening Post*, 8 March 1927, 12.

¹²² *Evening Post*, 7 May 1920, 7.

¹²³ *Evening Post*, 8 March 1927, 8, 12; *Evening Post*, 15 March 1927, 3; L. G. Goss, memo to Headquarters (enclosure), 2 February 1927, in *Visits and Inspections—Visit—HRH [His Royal Highness] the Duke of York to NZ 1927—Military Arrangements*, ANZ, AD1 904 42/151; L. G. Goss, memo to Headquarters (enclosure), 4 February 1927, in *Visits and Inspections Etc.*, ANZ, AD1 904 42/151; L. G. Goss, memorandum to Headquarters, 5 February 1927, in *Visits and Inspections Etc.*, ANZ, AD1 904 42/151; R. B. Smythe, “Visit of Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of

so than the Children's Day gathering in Parliament Grounds, the scenes at Newtown Park merged soldiers and school children into a single visual narrative.

Conclusion

Military images helped to depict Pākehā New Zealanders as a distinctive branch of the British diaspora. Putatively, their identity was founded upon ethnicity and tradition, so military performances for visiting royals attempted to demonstrate the persistence of inherited martial traits. Typically, events brought together veterans, returned soldiers, troops, and cadets. In the most vivid portrayals of inter-generational continuity, the four groups were arranged in order of age. The sequence began with old soldiers and ended with future recruits: men and boys creating a human timeline that spanned from the Crimean War to future military campaigns.

This continuum was made spatially explicit during Wellington's entry procession for the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York. It was reproduced for the Prince of Wales at the Newtown Park review. It occurred again in 1927, when costumed actors joined real soldiers and cadets to present a dramatized survey of British military history. Significantly, the pageant's changing-of-the-guard scene depicted martial virtues being handed down from grandfather to grandson and from Britain to her dominions.

To fully articulate New Zealand's emerging identity, military performances also needed to express the favoured hallmarks of antipodean character. Initially, distinctive national attributes cohered around the figures of the Rough Rider and the Digger. These larger-than-life wartime heroes represented both orthodoxy and independence: both respect for British military heritage and a lively sense of difference. However, increasingly, the military narrative came to depend on young New Zealanders. Over the course of three royal visits, images of soldiers and school children converged: first, in the figure of the military cadet; second in the review-like children's demonstrations; and, finally, when the two groups performed together at the 1927 tattoo.

Children offered a particularly versatile symbol; one that was well suited to the compound identity of dominion nationalism. According to the royal visits' military narrative, Pākehā New Zealanders possessed a combination of British self-restraint and colonial dynamism. In 1901, Wellington's entry procession successfully combined the stability of the human timeline with the swagger of the mounted escort. The ambiguous mixing of genres at the 1927 tattoo did likewise. However, conventional military ceremonies generally failed to convey the requisite blend of discipline and vigour. Representing Pākehā identity was easier when soldierly traits were acted out by the nation's school children. Provided the youngsters remained spatially contained, outbursts of exuberance were tolerated and even commended. On these occasions, the children's enthusiasm was keyed to presumed national traits such as physical strength and intense affection for the royal family.

Images of children had another important advantage. As the phrase "young New Zealand" suggests, they were emblematic of an emerging independent state. At London's behest, the military narrative mythologised war as a rite of passage towards full nationhood. Accordingly, royal-visit rhetoric required symbols of rebirth as well as sacrifice: depictions of healthy energetic youngsters to set alongside the spectre of men broken on the battlefield. As interpreted by

York to New Zealand–February–March, 1927. Amended Instructions" (undated), in *Visits and Inspections Etc.*, ANZ, AD1 904 42/151.

officials in Wellington, the signs of rejuvenation also denoted New Zealand's distinctive contribution to the British world. Given a literal reading, massed gatherings of school children demonstrated the dominion's ability to replenish imperial forces. Metaphorically, the displays showed that the continued vigour of the British people depended on the diasporic communities of the new commonwealth.