

# It's Not (Just) Cricket: Archaeology of cricket buckles in 19th century New Zealand

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## ABSTRACT

Metal belt buckles featuring cricket motifs appear in historic period archaeological excavations across New Zealand and several other territories of the former British Empire. They have been found on different types of sites but are often associated with military redoubts or people with military backgrounds. These cricket buckles and their associated belts were often cherished items for New Zealand men during the mid-late 19th century. Overseas, and especially in the United Kingdom and Australia, these elaborate buckles are thought only to have been popular during the late 1850s to the 1870s, a period which coincided with the influx of British troops and the creation of local militia during the New Zealand Wars. The paper discusses how the military links with cricket influenced how the game spread across New Zealand. Imperial soldiers were a crucial stimulus in the early development of the sport in New Zealand, especially in the North Island before being taken up by civilian players throughout the colony. This stimulus was reflected in the importance of cricket merchandise. An analysis of newspaper advertisements confirms a similar pattern of interest in cricket belts, and probably the elaborate buckles, in New Zealand during the 1860s–1880s. The advertising tracks the popularity of the sport and the development of seasonal retail availability for the belts in both New Zealand and Australia during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Military, sports, and merchandising were all reflected in a passion for cricket that was interwoven in the colonial and settler ideologies of the late British Empire.

## INTRODUCTION

This paper examines some of the unusual items associated with cricket found in historic sites in New Zealand. These come in the form of belt buckles which have been found on several sites. The archaeology of sport has not been a focus of research here, with very little material culture identified in excavation beyond children's games and toys such as dominoes or dolls (see *e.g.*, Bickler *et al.* 2007: 89, 94; Shakles *et al.* 2017: 122, 139–141), although they were an essential component of New Zealand material culture for centuries (Veart 2014). The history of cricket in New Zealand has been well documented (see *e.g.*, Neely and Neely 1994, Ryan 1996). Henry Williams wrote about Māori playing a cricket game in Paihia in 1832 (Rogers 1961: 268) and famously Charles Darwin watched Māori playing at Waimate in 1835 when he visited Northland while on the *Beagle* (Darwin 1890: 452). Cricket, despite its arcane, yet familiar rules, had wide appeal during the 19th and early 20th centuries having been adopted and adapted throughout the British colonies. The equipment required is relatively easy to obtain: a bat, ball, and stumps, although all have become specialised. However, despite their popular-

ity, these items have rarely been found or recognised in New Zealand archaeological excavations (*e.g.*, Grouden and O'Keeffe 2017: 128), although a hidden location where lost cricket balls end up would seem a possibility (see *e.g.*, Harlow *et al.* 2012: 40). We focus here on the belt buckles that have been found and expand on how these items can be used to explore changes in New Zealand society during the 19th century.

## CRICKET BUCKLES FROM NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

The buckles are typically made from metal with an embossed motif relating to cricket. They have been found in at least 13 archaeological sites in New Zealand (Figure 1). Furthermore, they are frequently reported by metal detectorists both in New Zealand and overseas, especially in Australia. Meilak (2018) reports over 680 cricket-themed buckles collected by detectorists and held in museums with over 100 similar buckles of different sporting themes. Online searching of forums by the authors suggests that they are frequently found in New Zealand and particularly from military sites, but given the legal status of looting here, information is not usually provided. We also suspect that a large number are likely held in private hands. This article discusses those found in professional excavations, although it is likely we have not captured all of those as they are often degraded or misidentified. The range of contexts does

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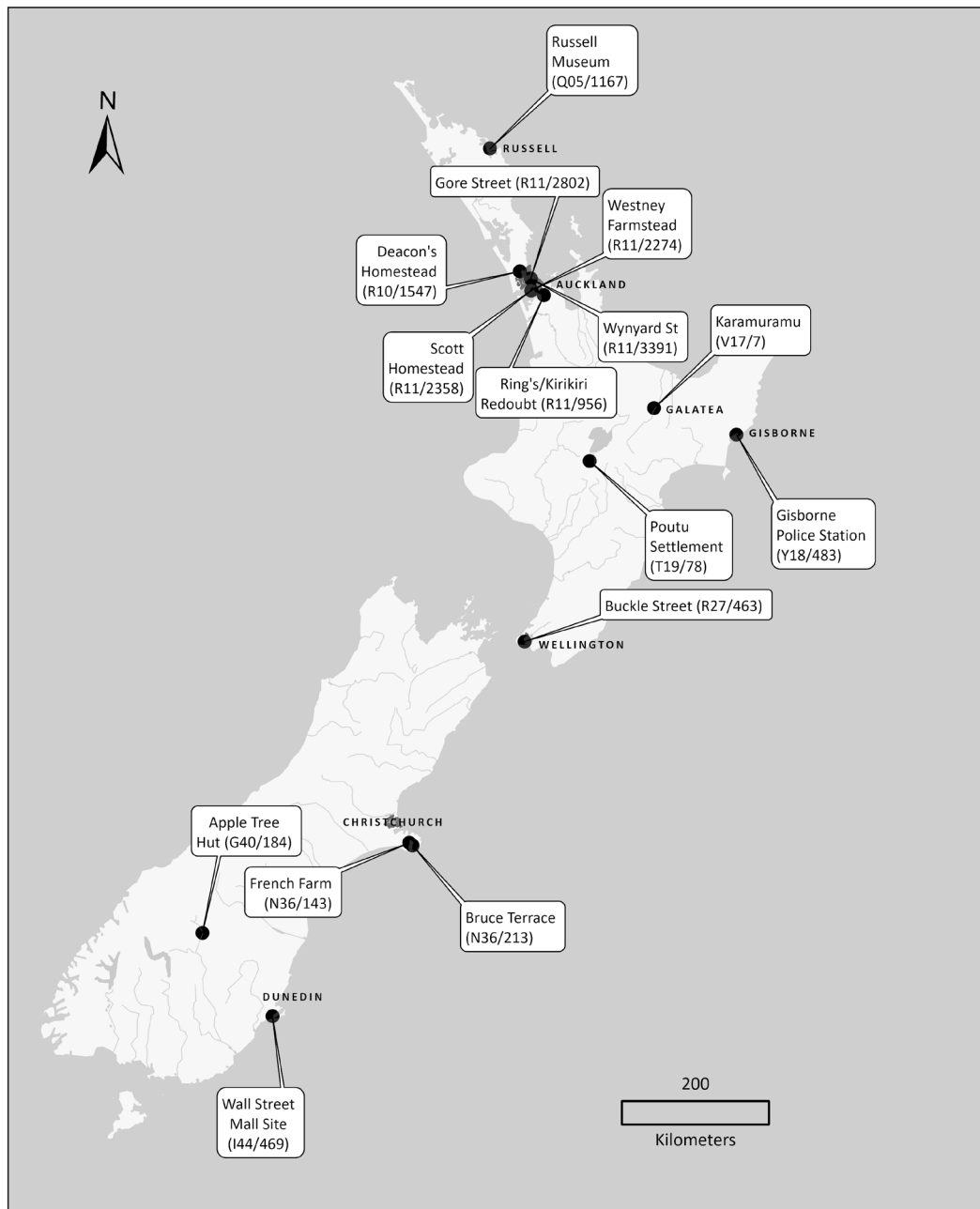


Figure 1. Map showing known archaeological sites where cricket buckles have been found in New Zealand.

allow for a broader discussion relating the buckles to the development of cricket in New Zealand.

#### **Karamuramu, Bay of Plenty (V17/7)**

A fragment of a cricket belt buckle was found at Karamuramu excavation (V17/7) associated with Fort Galatea in the Bay of Plenty and the military compounds there (Spring-Rice 1983). The buckle fragment was recovered from a rubbish pit and shows a bat leaning on some wickets, but the rest of the image is absent (Figure 2A). The border of round objects typically symbolises cricket balls.

#### **Poutu Settlement, Taupo District (T19/78)**

Newman (1988: 111) describes a buckle (#98) recovered from trench fill during excavations by Hosking of T19/78 on the stream banks leading into Lake Rotoaira south of Taupo. No image is provided but it is described as having a '[r]aised design on front depict[ing] cricket bats, stumps and two balls. On back are words 'REGISTERED NOV. 1866 S & WB' and a trademark in form of a diamond divided into five sections with a square and a ball on top'. The site is considered to relate to the 1869 colonial military activities and is possibly a camp site, but the fill material is gener-

ally thought to post-date 1869, relating to later settlement (Newman 1988: 103ff).

The diamond registration mark relates to the designs registered under the *Patents, Designs and Trade Marks Office and Predecessor: Ornamental Design Act 1842* in the UK and listed in the National Archives there (Halls 2014). Meilak (2018: 17ff) summarises the registered cricket belt designs and it seems likely that the buckle was based on the Smith and Wright Company based in Birmingham. Smith and Wright registered several designs from 1861–1869 including seven in November 1866. Further archival research may allow this specific design to be identified.

#### Russell Museum, Bay of Islands (Q05/1167)

An artefact (Figure 2B) identified as a 'copper alloy two-piece item' was excavated by Best (2007: 12) in a test pit next to the Russell Museum in the Bay of Islands. Best (2007: 12–13) identified the item as a 'badge' as it included a centre piece that separated 'from the surrounds, with a fastening clip suitable for a pocket or a slit in the fabric'. It seems likely this is a buckle (pers. comm. Best 2017). The decoration includes a central motif of crossed cricket bats with a ball above, and a hand holding two ribbons. Some corn or grain stalks appear in the background around the border. The motto 'NIL DESPERANDUM' (Don't Despair) is embossed on the centre ribbon.

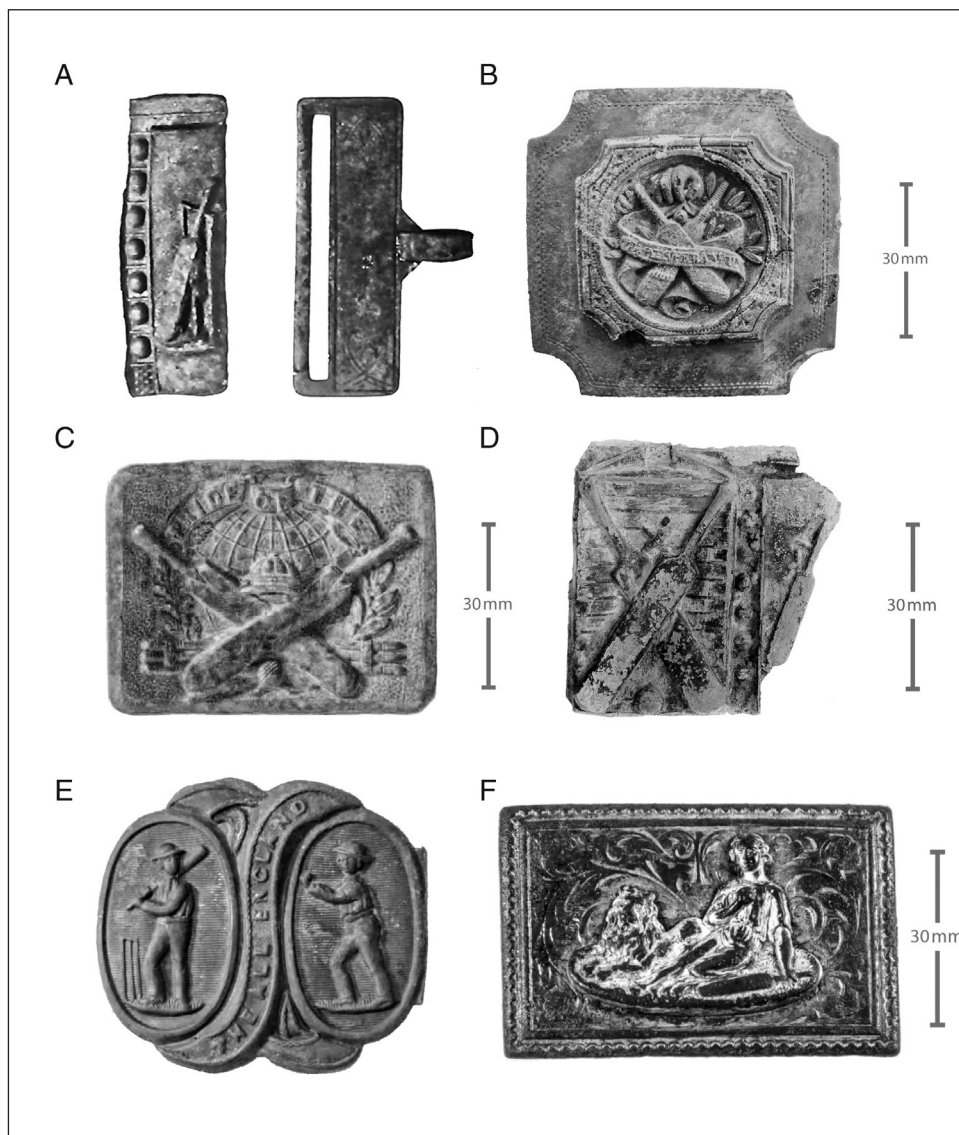


Figure 2. Six buckles from excavations in Aotearoa New Zealand (A–F). A: Buckle fragment from Karamuramu and the A.C. Pit (Spring-Rice 1983: Plate 3: 25); B: Buckle from Russell Museum site (courtesy Simon Best); C: Buckle from Westney Farmstead (Campbell and Furey 2006: 136); D: Buckle from Scott Homestead (Furey 2011: Figure 5.19); E: 'The All-England' buckle (56 × 50mm) from (Petchey 2009: Figure 125); F: Gilt covered buckle from Bruce Terrace, Akaroa (Trendafilov *et al.* 2019: Figure 144).

*Nil desperandum* was a commonly used phrase during the Victorian period including as a name for 19th century cricket clubs in both Australia (The Colonist, Trove Website 1889) and New Zealand (Otago Daily Times, PapersPast 1878; see also Meilak 2018: 40) and indeed ships, gold-mining batteries and mines and other sports clubs. Although Best (2007: 22) reports there was a Kororekareka Cricket Club in the 1860s playing around the region, there is no known link to the motto. The origins of this buckle are not known, and the context makes it difficult to add much more detail except that it probably dates from the second half of the 19th century (see also Meilak 2018: 421 #6.18.7).

#### **Westney Farmstead, Auckland (R11/2274)**

Excavation at the Westney Farmstead (R11/2274) in Māngere, south Auckland by Campbell and Furey (2006) included recovery of a cricket buckle. Described as a 'badge' made from copper alloy, it consisted of a 60 × 47mm stamped metal plate. The design included two crossed bats, a cap above, and a ball below with stumps lying behind (Figure 2C). The words, 'PRIDE OF THE...' sit above a globe in the background. Harris (2006: 136) suggests that the image of the globe is synonymous with the word 'World', while Meilak (2018: 603 #3.20.23), illustrates an identical buckle with the same phrase also lacking a final word but shown in contrast with another different buckle with the phrase 'THE PRIDE OF OUR NATIONAL SPORTS'.

#### **Scott Homestead, Auckland (R11/2358)**

Near the Westney Farmstead, another fragmentary buckle (Figure 2D.) was found at the Scott Homestead (Furey 2011: 114). A pair of crossed cricket bats is visible with a vertical row of balls and part of another bat leaning over as well. It is like the fragment found at Karamuramu (V17/7).

#### **Gisborne Police Station (Y18/483)**

Barr (2008: 82) describes a 'Metalware iron pin and bronze buckle? face plate ('Cricket')' from the Layer 3 excavation at the Gisborne Police Station (Y18/483). However, no further details are known regarding the artefact.

#### **Wall Street Mall Site, Dunedin (I44/469)**

Another buckle is described from excavations of the Wall Street Mall Site (I44/469), in Dunedin (Petchey 2009). This buckle (Figure 2E) is stamped with images of a batsman and a bowler with a central banner marked 'THE ALL ENGLAND'. Petchey (2009: 96) reports that the All England Eleven was a cricket team that toured New Zealand in 1864 and played the Dunedin Cricket Club. He argues that it is likely this buckle relates to that tour. A similar one has been

found in Australia (Meilak 2018: 878 #6.22.41) so it appears likely that these were commemorative pieces probably sold during the tour.

#### **Bruce Terrace, Akaroa (N36/213)**

An extraordinary belt buckle (Figure 2F) was recovered from excavations in Akaroa (N36/213) showing a woman reclining in front of a lion and holding a cricket bat. Trendafilov *et al.* (2019: 132) described the rectangular buckle as being made of copper alloy with remains of a gold leaf (or gilt?) coating. Typically, the lion motif is associated with the English team and found in opposition to kangaroos on cricket buckles found in Australia (see Meilak 2018).

#### **Wynyard St, Auckland (R11/3391)**

Bickler *et al.* (2007: 92) identified another buckle from a rectangular brick feature approximately 1m wide and about 1.5m deep discovered at the front of the 19th century house at Wynyard St in central Auckland, now part of the University of Auckland. The brick feature had been in-filled with a variety of artefacts particularly champagne bottles near the top and a range of other food and domestic items. Nearer the base, the fill included rubble such as bricks and large blue stones. The buckle was found along with broken china, glass, and other metal objects and was in poor condition. This rectangular buckle (Figure 3G) appears to have a central globe with wickets at the top with players on either side. There is a batsman on one side, while the other cannot be clearly distinguished. The motto on the bottom is too worn to decipher. A probable identical buckle is shown in Meilak (2018: 898 #6.22.53) with both figures identifiable as batsmen and the phrase 'HURRAH FOR THE BAT AND THE BALL' within the bottom scroll. The crest consists of crossed bats in the top right and bottom left quadrants and a chevron with three dots inside. It is possible that the crest describes a specific cricket club, but which club has not yet been determined.

#### **Gore Street, Auckland (R11/2802)**

During the Fort Street Area Upgrade works, a decorative and gilded brass copper alloy cricket buckle was recovered from an extensive refuse deposit that sealed the original foreshore along the line of an early shipping wharf (R11/2802) in what is now Gore Street (Shakles *et al.* in prep). The deposit was up to 1 metre thick and consisted almost entirely of artefactual material, with relatively large amounts of glass including complete bottles of black beer, case gin, champagne, water (torpedo bottles), and large quantities of ceramics, clay tobacco pipes, as well as other domestic and industrial objects including items of iron and copper alloy. It is likely that the deposit was initially formed by the dumping of refuse, by nearby businesses and

households, probably from the wharf at the beginning of the Commercial Bay reclamation in 1859 which continued into the 1860s and possibly later (R11/2464).

The buckle is of oval form with a vertical bat over a sunburst with cricket balls decorating the slide (Figure 3H) and is the same as one recorded by Meilak (2018: 319 #6.11.1). The buckle may have been deposited as the result of accidental loss during the boarding or disembarking process from a vessel moored at the wharf.

**Buckle Street, Wellington (R27/463)**

The front decorative plate of a rectangular pressed copper alloy belt buckle was recovered from the backfill of a late 19th century drainage trench associated with a mid to late 19th century domestic site (R27/463) situated to the rear of the Home of Compassion Crèche (on the aptly named Buckle Street) as part of the archaeological investigations

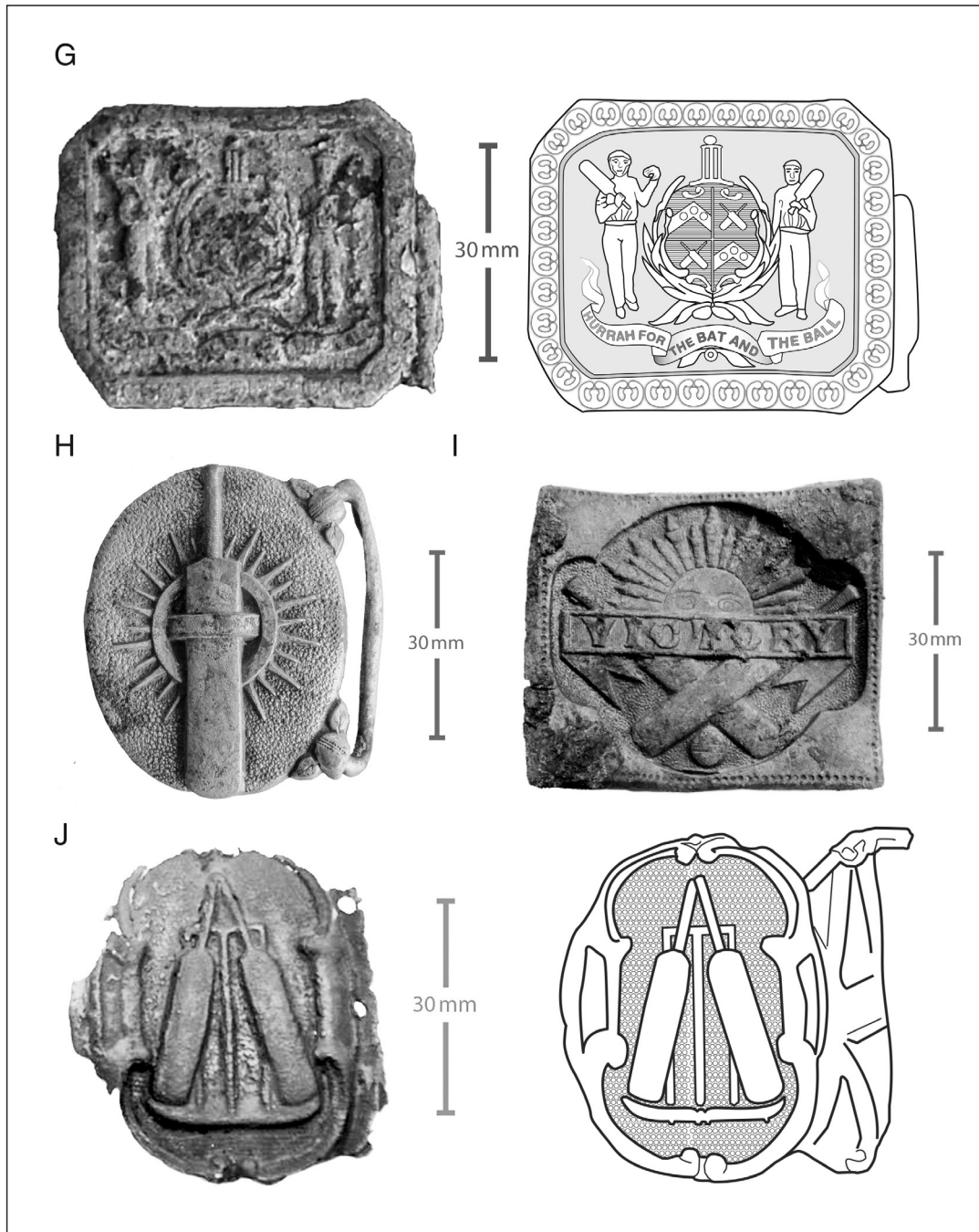


Figure 3. Four buckles from excavations in Aotearoa New Zealand (G–J). G: Buckle (with sketch of motif) from Allotment 19, Wynyard St (Bickler *et al.* 2007: 92); H: Buckle from Gore Street R11/888 (Shakles *et al.* in prep. 2023); I: 'Victory' Cricket Buckle from W1C1 (Shakles *et al.* 2017); J: Pressed copper alloy cricket belt buckle from Kirirkiri/Ring's Redoubt (Shakles *et al.* 2021).

undertaken for the Pukeahu War Memorial Park in Wellington (Shakles *et al.* 2017:128). The buckle may originally have belonged to a soldier stationed at the 65th Regiment's headquarters located at the Mount Cook Barracks from the late 1840s to the 1860s, or perhaps a member of the subsequent Armed Constabulary (1867–1886). The site is also in very close proximity to the original home of NZ Test Cricket at the Wellington Basin Reserve.

The design consists of two crossed cricket bats with a ball (with seam depicted) at the base in the centre (Figure 3I). Behind is a rising sun, the sunbeams of which are comprised of both bails and upturned cricket stumps, and two eyes forming a face. The word 'Victory' is emblazoned within a ribbon frame across the centre (Figure 3I). The buckle was manufactured in brass with the design pressed onto a thin sheet.

The buckle was most likely manufactured sometime between the 1860s to 1880s, when cricket was the most popular sport in New Zealand, in part due to the large number of cricket-playing soldiers who arrived during the Land Wars. While it is possible that the buckle represents one of eleven that were presented to a member of a victorious team perhaps commemorating an important match, it is more likely that it represents a mass-produced souvenir piece.

The buckle is unusual in that the quality of the manufacture appears to be relatively poor compared with the others described here. The stamped metal is relatively thin. The design also appears to be less detailed, perhaps also suggestive of a mass-produced piece. While the buckle was found on Buckle Street, this is a mere coincidence and not a sign that the belt buckle represents a localised industry, being instead named for one of the former directors of the New Zealand Company, John William Buckle!

### Ring's/Kirikiri Redoubt (R11/956)

A fragment of a pressed buckle was found at Kirikiri/Ring's Redoubt (R11/956) and retrieved from a redeposited under-floor refuse deposit of a large barracks structure (Shakles *et al.* 2021:193–197, Figure 3J). The deposit contained abundant mid-19th century historic artefacts including military uniform paraphernalia which includes regimental buttons, ordnance such as Minié bullets and musket balls, as well as ceramics, glass, clay tobacco pipes and miscellaneous metal objects of copper alloy, iron, and lead. The buckle featured a design of two cricket bats leaning against one another (handle to handle) with a set of stumps and bails behind, in raised relief, but due to significant corrosion, the belt buckle only partially survived. However, Meilak's (2018: 342 #6.13.5) version of the buckle shows that if complete the design would also have incorporated a draped Union Jack on the belt side of the buckle and a pistol in the corner. The nationalistic and militaristic elements of the buckle fit well with the occupation of the Redoubt in the 1860s during the NZ Land Wars.

### Deacon Homestead (R10/1547)

A cricket buckle was recovered from a later 19th century demolition deposit related to a mid-19th century home on land at Deacon Point in Riverhead (R10/1547), northwest of Auckland. The buckle was found within an extensive artefact-rich deposit that had probably been derived from an underfloor refuse disposal area (Phear *et al.* in prep.).

The buckle was one of the more complex types and features an elaborate design that consists of an oval cartouche in which a cricketer is depicted holding a bat under his right arm in front of a set of stumps, framed within a plaque set over two sets of crossed bats and which themselves are placed over two sets of stumps (Figure 4K). Each set consists of four stumps bound together by a buckled strap. The tops of the gripped bat handles are also seen around the plaque while a small triangular tent with flying pennant is visible in the background to one side of the cricketer presumably representing a refreshments pavilion.

Outside of the oval cartouche, cricket balls complete with seams depicted are placed at the four corners of the buckle and set within a milled pattern border. Traces of gilding remain in places and in the lower left corner of the oval cartouche between the end of a cricket bat and the plaque a British diamond registration mark is present which gives a date of 15 November 1872 (Figure 4K). The registration mark and the details it contained within confirmed that the design had been registered in Britain and afforded it three year's copyright protection (see also Halls 2014).

The artefact rich deposit from which the cricket buckle was excavated also contained large amounts of bottle glass, clay tobacco pipes, and frequent iron and copper alloy objects including a Royal Navy officers uniform button and a further belt buckle depicting a rower. The buckle as with the cricket example consisted of a pressed brass design that consisted of a rower with oar in hand in a small scull on the water inside an oval cartouche upon the bottom of which is emblazoned 'Pull Away' (Figure 4M). The outer frame also incorporates a ropework motif with garlands of ribbons at the four corners. This example of a rowing buckle appears unique in archaeological contexts in New Zealand.

### Apple Tree Hut (G40/184)

Ritchie (1986) excavated a cricket buckle centrepiece at the Apple Tree Hut site near Cromwell in Central Otago. The hut, a lean-to style structure, belonged to a Chinese miner who likely constructed and inhabited it from the late 19th century until his death in the early 20th century (Ritchie 1986:111). The centrepiece featured two crossed bats within a diamond shape adorned with acorn and oak-leaf clusters along the edges (Figure 4N). This was framed by two sets of stumps with cricket balls. It is likely that it had been attached onto a backing plate. Ritchie (1986: Figure 5.97(1)) portrays the bats with blades up, although it was probably

worn oriented with the handles at the top as shown by Meilak (2018:69 #6.1.6). The centrepiece design is shown on a similar stamped buckle by Meilak (2018: #6.19.43). Whether the miner had any association with cricket is not known.

### French Farm (N36/143)

Watson (2022: 210–211) recovered up to three cricket buckles at the French Farm in Akaroa Bay, opposite Akaroa in Canterbury, during work associated with the old farmhouse. The best example was a 'snake' buckle found in

an open drain with snakeheads at either end and with a cricket bat overlaid with a set of wickets and a cricket ball on top in the centre (Figure 4O, Meilak 2018: 1060 #6.29.6). Its origins are unknown, but as Watson (2022: 11, 210) notes, one of the fields was known as 'The Cricket Pitch' during the time that the farm was being used as a school, which places it after the mid-1870s by association. The other two excavated possibilities included a heavily damaged rectangular buckle and another separate belt adjuster similar to those found in the other two examples, but neither were in good enough condition to be further identified (Watson 2022: Figure 234).

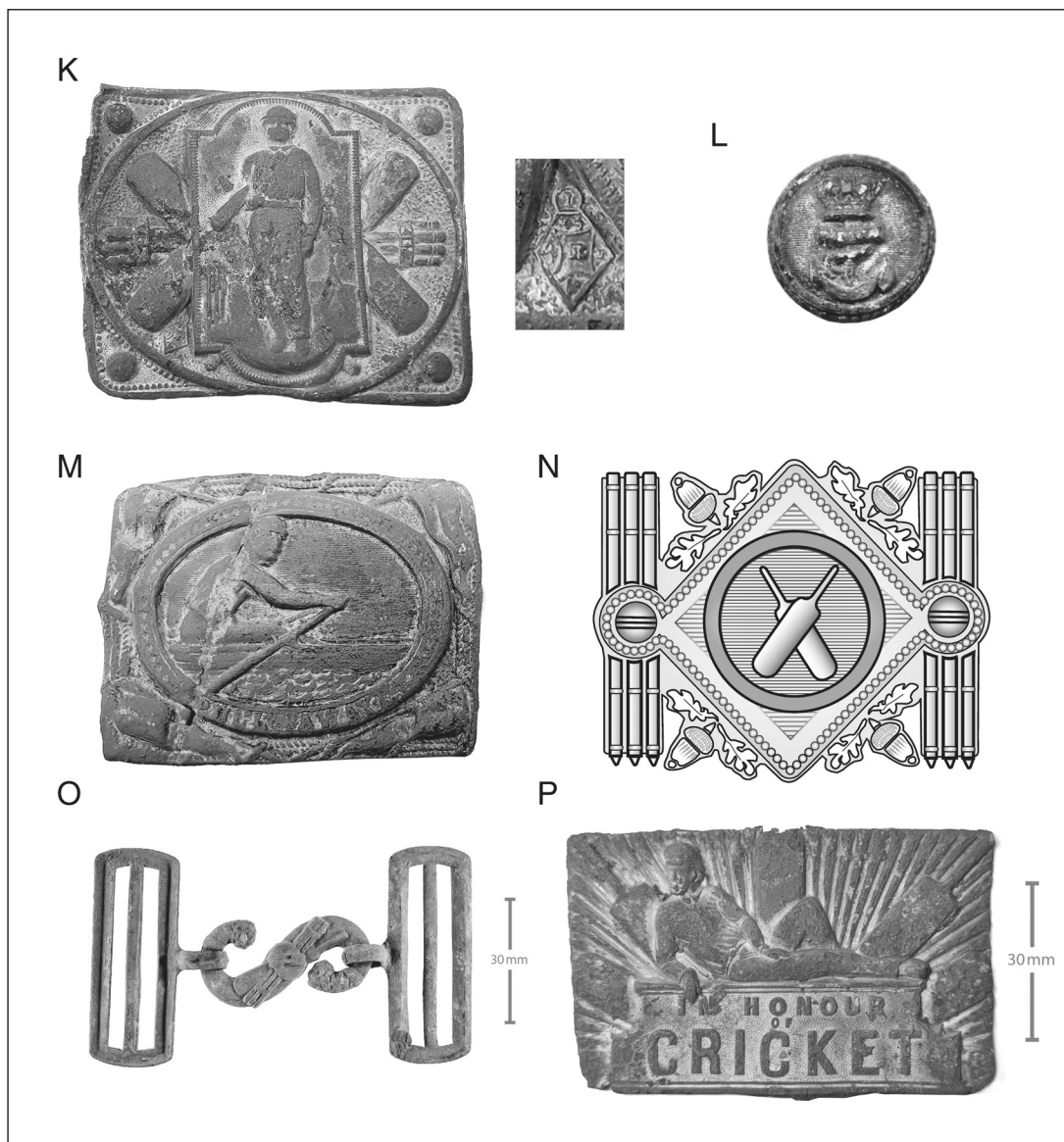


Figure 4. Buckles and a button from excavations in Aotearoa New Zealand (K–P). K: Buckle found at Deacon's Homestead site (R10/1547) with close-up of diamond registration mark; L: Royal Navy button found at Deacon's Homestead site (R10/1547); M: Rowing buckle with phrase 'Pull Away' found at Deacon's Homestead site (R10/1547); N: Buckle from Apple Tree Hut (G40/184) after Ritchie (1986: Figure 5.97); O: Cricketing snake buckle from French Farm (Watson 2022: Figure 233); P: 'In Honour of Cricket' Buckle from Christchurch (Trendafilov pers. comm.).

## Other Buckles

Recent excavations continue to sporadically recover additional examples of belt buckles. Trendafilov (pers. comm. 2023) found another example showing a recumbent cricketer, wearing a belt with a buckle, on a plinth with 'In Honour of Cricket' (Figure 4P). In the background are a burst of rays and cricket bats. Gilt was still present on parts of the item. The site contained material from the 1920s. Meilak (2018: 622 #6.20.36) illustrates another example of the same design from the Australian Sports Museum website (Catalogue Number M6654), but in silver and dated between 1850–1890.

Another buckle from Hereford Street in Christchurch (M35/2230) was found and attributed by the excavators as probably a cricket buckle (Adam *et al.* 2022: 54–55) but the design does not have obvious cricketing elements. Museum collections contain more examples. Two are shown on the NZ Cricket Museum collections Website (accessed 2023). One is a square buckle and clasp with a batsman and a bowler standing by the wicket striking a pose (see also Meilak 2018: 410 #6.17.24). The other is an oval buckle with cross bats (at the handles) above a ball and stumps lying down (see also Meilak 2018: 269 #6.7.13). Another one is shown in the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa collections and includes a University of Oxford crest and name (Te Papa Website, accessed 2023). Woods (2017: 173) refers to 'a miniature bone cricket bat which would have been part of a badge' found at the Victoria Retail Centre (R22/523) in Whanganui but it is not illustrated and may not be from a belt buckle.

This review demonstrates that the buckles are found throughout the country. Until recently the collection was dominated by North Island examples but the intensification of work around Christchurch has seen that balance shift in recent times. They are found in a range of contexts both domestic and military, although apparently not as common as found in Australia.

## CRICKET BUCKLES FROM AUSTRALIA

Rusden (2007: 3–4) describes some of the best examples in the Melbourne Cricket Ground Museum collection which include embroidered and woven belts. Several archaeological reports *e.g.*, Lydon (undated) describe a buckle with the inscription 'I AM HERE' found at The Rocks in Sydney and associate the symbol with George Parr's All England Tour in 1864/5 based on the presence of a reclining lion in front of the batsmen with knotted tie, cap and striped uniform.

Thirteen sporting buckles are reported from Baker's Flat in Kapunda, South Australia (Arthure 2014, Burke *et al.*, 2018). Two of the cricket buckles had diamond registration marks that give dates of 1869 and somewhere between 1868–1883 (Arthure 2014: 72). Only two of the buckles are illustrated, one with a bowler and batsman

during a 'run-out', the other a team image with the caption: 'WE ARE READY OUR CLUB'. The buckles were found by a metal detectorist so there is little contextual information, although Arthure (2014) does show how cricket was part of Irish identity in the colonial context.

The UK National Archives (Halls 2014) mentions archaeologist Hilda Maclean finding two other examples with burials in North Brisbane although there is no description. Another buckle was identified in a burial found in Cadia Cemetery, NSW (used between 1864–1927), and consisting of diagonally crossed bats, stumps, and a ball in the middle (Cadia Valley Heritage accessed 2023). Another example held at the National Museum of Australia shows a stamped slide with a separate plain friction buckle attached to an ornate belt. Monty Faithfull's buckle shows the other area of elaboration, the belt itself (National Museum of Australia Website accessed 2023). They were most commonly of cotton canvas and, as such, rarely survive in the archaeological record.

As discussed above, these excavated examples are a small sample of the hundreds that have been found by detectorists in Australia (Meilak 2018). This all points to the regularity of the occurrence of the buckles, which although not common, are seen to have been widespread across Australia by the latter half of the 19th century. There is a range of imagery, some static in nature showing bats, balls, and stumps and others more dynamic depicting cricketing action such as bowling, batting, and wicket keeping.

The buckles are found in a range of contexts: domestic, around sports fields where cricket was played, and interestingly with burials. Mark Thurtell is reported to have collected early Australian photographs showing a range of people wearing cricket buckles in formal portraits including images of formal photos of prisoners from Darlinghurst Prison, NSW dating to the 1870s (Meilak 2018: 8ff). As Maclean describes it: 'People tended to be buried in their favourite clothes, or their Sunday best, so if they were especially keen on cricket, that would explain the cricketing belt buckles.' (Halls 2014).

## BELTS, BRACES, TIES AND SCARVES

Belt buckles and belts generally were common during the 19th century in New Zealand. The cricketing uniform was important as part of playing this gentlemen's sport. The men's game was played with jackets, coming into the game during the late 18th century before disappearing largely from the field during the mid-19th century. Trousers replaced breeches during the early 19th century (Cunnington and Mansfield 1967: 16–18). However, keeping one's trousers up was fundamental and while braces had been the most common form of support, belts were the main alternative and dominated after the 1850s during any serious game (Cunnington and Mansfield 1967: 25). Ties were also commonly worn in formal photographs but were also a minor annoyance during the game and eventually



discarded. Cricket buckles had first been introduced in England in 1854 by Edward Ade of Oxford Street, London, together with the plain cotton canvas belts, and represent an early example of sport impacting upon commercialism and fashion (Rusden 2007: 4).

The belt 'buckles', or more correctly slides or trims, were generally friction based, based on threading the belt through the slides in various ways, rather than the frame-style buckle with a prong. The decorative style buckles appeared in England in the 1850s and were generally fitted to canvas belts, although some examples were embroidered and featured elaborate Berlin wool work (Rusden 2007: 3). Many of these belts (including examples in the Melbourne Cricket Club collections) feature floral designs, the needlework patterns of which were widely available at the time and seems to explain their use for the cricket belts (Rusden 2007: 3). It could perhaps be considered somewhat surprising that floral patterns may have been prevalent on belts and are not what one would expect to be found on cricketer's apparel! It is likely that the belts would have been worked on by the mothers, sisters, wives, made themselves, and by friends of the cricketers (Rusden 2007). Brass and gilt were commonly used with designs pressed into the buckle, and the canvas belts ranged from plain to decorative, sometimes with cricket designs. Some belts were beaded. These elaborate buckles and belts however appeared to fall out of favour relatively quickly especially in England from around 1868 when elastic became more readily available.

W.G. Grace, the quintessential cricketer of the Victorian Era is largely credited with the eschewing of belts stating:

Braces are not worn when playing cricket ... a strap and buckle at the back should be used instead. The straps should be made so that the buckle can be removed when washing is necessary, as the buckle is very likely to stain and cut the trousers if left on... Many of the old cricketers used to wear belts to keep their trousers from slipping down; I prefer a scarf, as it looks better and will grip quite as firmly, and you will not run the risk of being given out caught at the wickets through the handle of the bat coming in contact with the buckle of the belt. (Grace 1890: 390)

Historic photos of teams from the late 19th century are shown in their 'whites', during formal games, with scarves, and a range of belts often with large buckles including those with the relatively common 'snake' buckles. The 'snake', or 'swan' buckles are found in archaeological sites in New Zealand (see e.g., Best 2005, Macready and Goodwyn 2002: 119ff, Shakles *et al.* 2019) and are associated with military uniforms (Archaeology on the Frontier Website 2017) and sometimes decorated or attached to cricket themed elements (Meilak 2018: 1054–1061) with the example from

French Farm (N36/143) in Akaroa Bay (Watson 2022) the clearest example identified in New Zealand to date.

## FASHION AND SYMBOLS

How fashions in cricket in the UK (e.g., Cunnington and Mansfield 1967) impacted players in the colonies has yet to be fully explored although by the time cricket was a more civilian recreation, the formal attire was the 'whites'. However, in rural New Zealand, there was probably more flexibility in attire for the less formal of games. The relatively short lifespan of the belts and the elaborate buckles from the late 1850s onwards is part of what makes them valuable for exploring the role of cricket in early NZ colonial life.

Most of the examples from archaeological excavations in New Zealand appear to be imported although with the possibility of the Buckle St example being of local manufacture. However, the range of motifs that have been found on buckles, particularly in Australia demonstrates a more complex story. Bats, balls, wickets, gloves along with players bowling, batting, portraits, and crests all make an appearance and portray the more literal aspects of the game. The mottos more obviously push the attributes to which Victorian gentlemen should aspire.

A buckle found in England depicts an Aboriginal cricketer with a bat over his shoulder and boots hanging off the bat. The buckle relates to 'The Aborigines' team, the first Australian team to tour England in 1868. A similar buckle is also reported as having been found in Australia (Antiques Trade Gazette Website 2015). This touring team was quite controversial in Australia at the time as this went to the heart of the legal status of Aboriginal people under colonial rule (see Boucher 2015: 74ff).

Intriguingly, some buckles demonstrate more complex histories. One of the most famous is a buckle found in the River Tweed in 1979 showing a black slave in chains, complete with slave collar, being bowled out. The evidence suggested that the buckle related to early cricket in the West Indies and dates from the late 18th century possibly with a date range from 1777–1780. An analysis by the University of Oxford revealed the buckle to be made of 'navy brass', an alloy of 90% copper and 10% zinc (*The Times*, 5 November 1986 p. 41). The 'Barbados Cricket Buckle' has subsequently appeared on coins, stamps, and trophies celebrating West Indian cricketers (Wikipedia Barbados Cricket Buckle). It is worth relating here that the earliest known reference to a cricket match played in the West Indies was in September 1809 in the Barbados Mercury and Bridgetown Gazette in which it was reported that a game was to be played 'between the Officers of the Royal West Indies Rangers and Officers of the Third West Indian Regiment for 55 guineas a side on the Grand Parade on Tuesday, September 19' (Beckles 1995 cited in Holland 2021).

### CRICKET AND THE MILITARY IN NEW ZEALAND

That the first recorded cricket match in the West Indies was a military fixture, should come as no surprise as both Bowen (1970) and Beckles (1995) attest that cricket was considered by commanding officers as an ideal source of recreation for soldiers and sailors. Even the Duke of Wellington was not alone in his conviction that battles were won on playing fields with a joke of the period being that an Englishman was more likely to take an interest in war if it could be compared to a game (Holland 2021). Moreover, Hilary Beckles further noted that Barbadian newspaper reports also stated that soldiers played cricket as a stress relieving activity, perhaps a game that allowed them to ‘play being at home’ whilst being a *long way* from home (Beckles 1995).

The spread of cricket around the world closely followed and mirrored that of the expansion of the Empire and was taken to the newly acquired territories and outposts by soldiers as well as sailors. By at least as early as 1709, cricket was being played in the United States (then British America); while in India the first documented game of cricket took place in 1721, and by the final quarter of the 18th century the game had been taken to the West Indies. The early 19th century saw the game spread to South Af-

rica and Australia, and then New Zealand in 1832 (Ryan 1996: 26). Soldiers spent two days clearing the ground for a cricket match on Norfolk Island in late 1838, possibly having played on the surface earlier (Best 1966: 189).

The game subsequently spread to Sri Lanka by the late 1830s, and in the later second half of the 19th century was being played in Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) and Kenya. While the game initially took root via incoming soldiers, in many of the territories the game would later expand to the indigenous populations and thrive, with India perhaps the most notable example.

In New Zealand cricket appears to have been played as soon as missionaries established themselves (Ryan 1996: 26ff), and the arrival of imperial troops during the New Zealand Wars in and after the 1850s appears to have been a significant driver in establishing the sport. Ryan (1996: 229ff) argues that this influence reached its peak around 1863 with the Waikato Wars. Ryan describes stories of the soldiers remaining armed while they played, often being called away during the matches.

The buckle recovered from Rings/Kirikiri Redoubt (See Figure 3J) almost certainly came from a soldier, and perhaps from the 18th Royal Irish Regiment of Foot that built and garrisoned the Redoubt (Shakles *et al.* 2021: 23–35). At least one keen cricketer was present with the Regi-



Figure 5. The 18th Royal Irish Regiment of Foot in military regalia outside a building (likely Albert Barracks) in the 1860s with one man holding a cricket bat. (Auckland Museum Library, PH-ALB-91-p34-4).

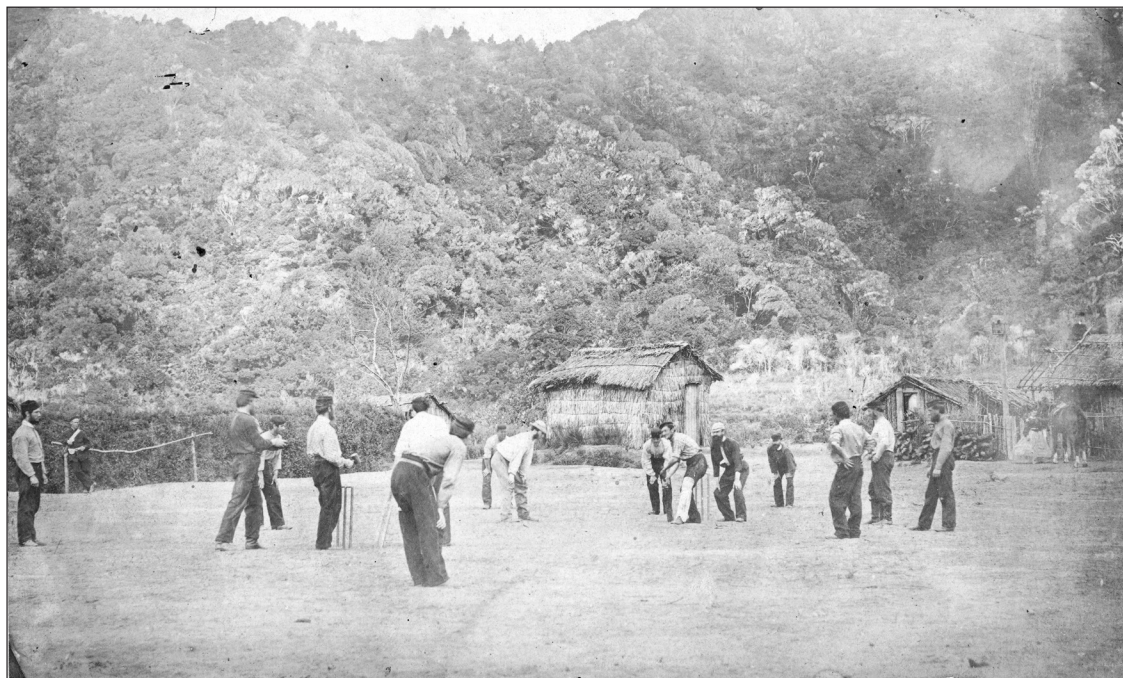


Figure 6. Cricket match circa 1870s at Pukearuhe of Armed Constabulary Station showing No. 9 Company, Taranaki Military Settlers, NCOs (A64.098 © Puke Ariki).

ment when they were in Auckland in 1863 as a photo of them probably taken at the Albert Barracks in Auckland (Figure 5) shows one soldier out of uniform sitting holding a cricket bat with the rest in full dress uniform.

A later newspaper report recorded the playing of a cricket match between the Kerikeri [sic] Redoubt against a team from the Papakura Redoubt on the 29 February 1864 (Daily Southern Cross 1864: 4). Moreover, the same article also recorded that the officer Lt Hatchell of the 43rd Monmouthshire Light Infantry played in the match for the Kerikeri [sic] Redoubt, presumably as he was a particularly proficient and well-known cricketer, at least within military circles.

Cricket clubs appeared and disappeared across the region often as the military influence waxed and waned into the 1870s (Figure 6, Ryan and Watson 2018: 45ff). The presence of the military reinforced cricket culture in the provinces as in both the North and South Islands cricket relied very much on a pattern of 'patronage and white-collar domination' (Ryan 1996: 237) during the 1850s-1860s, but to some extent it was hampered by a lack of concentrated numbers and infrastructure. The military provided both manpower and a reason to bring people together to play the game.

The relative popularity of the game of cricket in New Zealand may have been hampered by the combination of weather, ground development, and social organisation (Macdonald 2009: 273). In Australia, conditions across much of the country make preparation of reasonable quality wickets relatively straightforward. Long periods

of dry weather and areas of flat land requiring little landscaping meant that setting up games was straightforward. As a result, the game also crossed social boundaries with the game being played by rich and poor (see for instance Arthure 2014). Cooper (1999: 74ff) has argued that a combination of the less conducive weather in much of Canada and the game remaining within a relatively small Anglophile community there contributed to its lack of long-term popularity.

In New Zealand, the weather was much wetter, and large areas of open ground often required better preparation for more competitive games. In the UK, many of the grounds had been formed for minimal cost much earlier by relatively wealthy patrons, while in North America, the relatively large population base and popularity of the game in the mid-19th century helped in the uptake of the game. In the subcontinent and the West Indies, the social dynamics of imperialism, large population, cheap labour, and conducive weather made the game playable across the region and goes far to explain the sub-continent's current domination of the sport, at least in financial and attendance terms (see *e.g.*, Majumdar 2008, Secharan 2006).

As with other parts of the Empire, the establishment of cricket in New Zealand is directly correlated with the arrival and presence of the military. The initial expansion in popularity of the sport here corresponded with the arrival of troops from Australia, Britain, and India during the build-up amid the escalation of the Land Wars. The popularity of the game amongst the troops meant that there was a plentiful and motivated source of labour avail-

able to clear areas for grounds, as well as the players to establish a myriad of cricket clubs in the North Island. Conversely, in the South Island, the wealthy funded much of the development of the game as part of the settlement of the region and competing with the popularity of the game in the north. The North-South trend also reflected different attitudes towards sports in urban and rural areas (Macdonald 2009; Ryan and Watson 2018: 47–49). The association of cricket with the military may have contributed to making Māori less likely to become involved. Rugby in contrast could be played in a farm paddock in any conditions and that may have contributed to its subsequent rise in popularity in the later 19th century, after the last of the Imperial troops had departed (see *e.g.*, Macdonald 2009; Schrader 2016: 142ff).

### CRICKET MERCHANDISING

Measures of the popularity of either the cricket buckles or cricket belts are difficult to assess with any rigour. Reports from Australia suggest that the buckles themselves were popular between circa 1860–1880s, peaking between 1860–1875 (Lydon undated) but this is based largely on what is reported for the UK (see Halls 2014). The situation in New Zealand may not mirror the fashion in the UK so an attempt to determine a measure of popularity was undertaken based on an analysis of digitised newspaper

articles from the PapersPast NZ website.

A search of PapersPast for ‘cricket buckles’ produced few results but ‘cricket belts’ were commonly referred to in articles and advertisements. The use of belts seemed a valid proxy although the most ostentatious of the clips and buckles were not traceable. Using the DigitalNZ API meant that it was possible to undertake a systematic search of over three million pages of PapersPast newspapers for relevant material and provide some statistical analysis of the results (Bickler 2020).

The process involved querying the PapersPast newspapers for the phrase ‘cricket belt’ (including ‘cricket belt(s)’ and ‘belt(s) for cricket’), filtering the results to ensure that they did contain the exact expression, extracting those items catalogued as advertisements and then analysing the results. Almost 800 advertisements were identified, and the yearly results are shown in Figure 7 (top).

The chart suggests that cricket belts hit New Zealand with a splash in the early 1860s, dropping in popularity, until a resurgence from 1875 and fading once more before 1895. Advertising continued sporadically into the early 20th century. A closer examination of individual advertisements from the key periods identified indicated that most cricket belts were sold as part of general imports and stores. There seemed to be little specialisation. By the early 20th century, the advertising appeared to be targeted more at boys.

A similar analysis of advertising was undertaken from

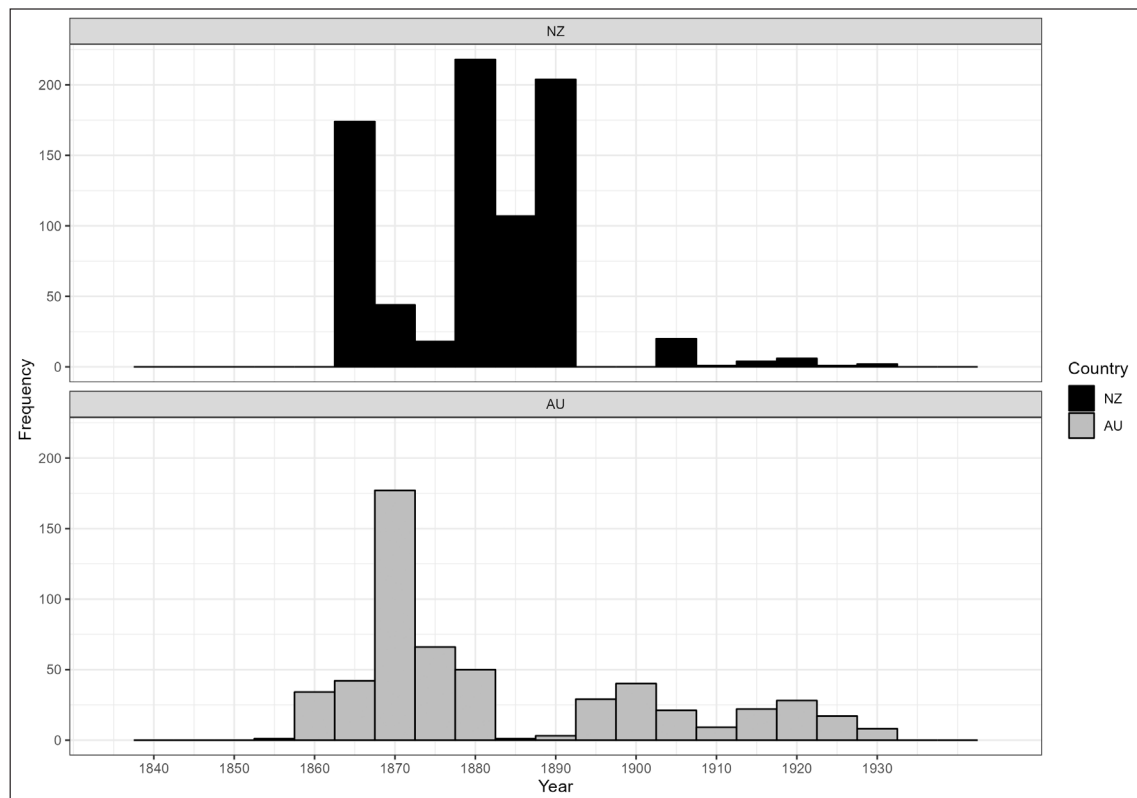


Figure 7. Histograms of counts of cricket belt advertisements from NZ and Australian newspapers between 1845–1935.

Australian newspapers using the Trove API which currently provides access to over 160 million newspaper articles from more than 1000 newspapers (Trove NLA Website). The extraction technique was like that undertaken for the PaperSpast corpus with a total tally of over 500 advertisements identified. The frequency distribution is shown in Figure 7 (bottom). The results show an appearance of advertising in the 1850s before the main peak around 1870 and a drop off in the mid-1880s. Interestingly a small rise in advertisements occurred again in the mid-1890s and continued at a low level through the first half of the 20th century. The elaborate belt buckles therefore seem to coincide with the general popularity of the belts between 1860–1880.

It was possible to explore the seasonality of the advertising by plotting the frequency of all advertisements by month in both countries (Figure 8). The results are shown by decade between 1860–1920 and in most cases illustrate an expected build-up of advertising for spring around August in time for the summer rush, peaking in November and December. As summer comes to an end in March and along with it the cricket season, the advertising tails away (Figure 8).

The data also suggests that this seasonality becomes more prominent through time. In New Zealand, the emphasis appears to be increasingly targeted towards December probably associated with Christmas gifts (Figure 8). In contrast, during the 1860s in Australia, the selling of belts was all year round (Figure 8). These trends are perhaps explained by a closer look at individual advertisements. Earlier advertising suggests that the belts were often advertised as part of the arrival of individual shipments carrying

a wide range of items. By the late 19th century in New Zealand, the belts were available from a range of advertisers including general stores and drapers' shops which may have been involved in both importing and manufacturing. However, by the 1920s and most obviously in Australia, it was specialist sports suppliers selling the belts and therefore targeting the cricket players and supporters.

Two other advertisements from Australia identified in the research were also of interest. One notes the sale of elastic cricket belts as early as 1858 (Goulburn Herald and County of Argyle Advertiser, 1858, Trove Website) and today most cricket pants are elasticated thereby preventing the problem of it affecting the batting. The second is one of the few to describe the sale of one of the elaborate buckles, in this case, the 'All England Eleven' buckle from 1874 (Sydney Morning Herald, 1874 Trove Website), which is probably similar to the one found in Dunedin (Petchey 2009: 96, Figure 2E).

The results of the data mining of newspapers are preliminary as the corpus of available resources is constantly changing and there are several potential sources of bias in the data. The number of papers and resources available grows significantly through time and no attempt has been made to compensate either for that or how that relates to 'popularity' with respect to the changing size of the audience. There are also difficulties with the quality of the Optical Character Recognition (OCR) which makes the reliability of identifying specific words and phrases variable. The context of the phrases is also problematic. For instance, an advertisement for 'cricket bats, belts and balls' will not be picked up whereas 'cricket belts, bats and balls' might.

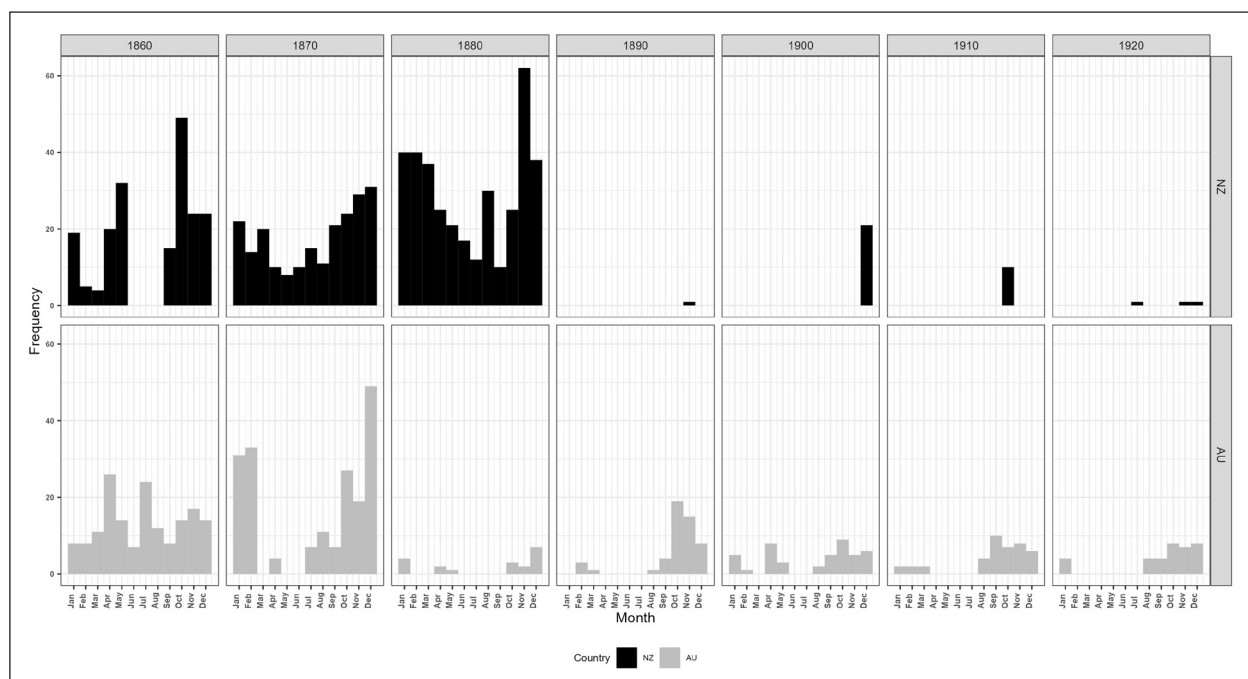


Figure 8. Monthly frequency of cricket belt advertising in NZ and Australian newspapers by decade.

Expanding the scope of this type of newspaper research will allow the quantification of less obvious trends.

Although the focus here has been on the advertising of the cricket belts, they are mentioned in other contexts in the newspaper articles. This includes being recorded in relation to bodies found wearing them, and their use in domestic violence incidents (see *e.g.*, Reconciliation in Court, Clutha Leader 1911). The belts were identifiable items of identity for Victorian and probably also Edwardian men in the British Empire.

### CRICKET AND COLONIALISM IN NEW ZEALAND

The history of sport in New Zealand has tended to skip quickly over the early period between 1840–1880s with cricket being one of the few sports that is recognisable in the media and material culture during this transformational period (see Ryan 1996). It is from the rise of rugby in the 1870s that the sport became more overtly tied to the creation of a national New Zealand identity although with less overt sentiment than in Australia (see *e.g.*, Pearson 1978: 10–11, Ryan and Watson 2018: 55ff). This cricket lens does obscure the participation of sport in the country undertaken by women and non-British men (Macdonald 2009, 2017) by being focused primarily on demonstrating the personal attributes such as pluck, decency, and fair play of colonial men (Ryan 1996; Ryan and Watson 2018: 47).

The examination of the metal buckles embossed with cricket imagery found during the excavation of 19th century archaeological sites in New Zealand provides a window into the complex social world of a burgeoning colony. The buckles were important items for Victorian-era men and the link between the status of cricket to New Zealand male identity in the 19th century is easy to establish. For instance, a brief examination of the *Dictionary of the NZ Biography* (Scholefield 1940) frequently describes the men from that era as ‘fine’, ‘prominent’, ‘good’, and ‘keen’ cricketers. Politician, poet, social reformer, and author of ‘The Long White Cloud’, William Pember Reeves’ biography states ‘[h]e had a normal love of games and represented his province both at cricket and at Rugby football’ (Condliffe 1940: 215). Being involved in cricket was a marker of both virtue and status and the prominent belt buckles showed that off.

None of the archaeologically recovered buckles from New Zealand sites are made from precious metals and would not have been particularly expensive, but they are packed with Victorian-era symbolism of Empire, not least the gilt buckle found in Akaroa with Britannia, perhaps, holding a cricket bat lying next to a recumbent lion (Figure 2F). Obvious cricket icons are linked with suitable adages relating to Victorian ideals for both players and fans. Manufacturing probably included both relatively inexpensive production for fans and players and bespoke items created along with other medals and trophies. They were made either by ironmongers or specialist craftsmen such as silver-

smiths. For belts, there were a range of options including canvas, woven cloth, silk, beaded, and leather. Elastic was present, eventually dominated and once incorporated into the trousers, an opportunity for overt symbolism was lost, as was one of the ways of inadvertently losing one’s wicket.

The analysis of over 2000 newspaper advertisements relating to cricket belts tracked significant changes in the retail marketing of goods in New Zealand and Australia from the 1850s through to the early 20th century. That belts were advertised specifically for cricket shows the sport’s importance in the burgeoning colony from very early on. That importance continued into the 20th century but shifted to a more familiar modern retail approach relating to its playing season. The advertisements highlight the functional role of the belts, and presumably associated buckles, soon replaced by elastic for keeping trousers up. The more ornate buckles, however, provided more scope for cricketers to show off their loyalty to the sport and the values that it encompassed.

Cricket was massively popular across the Empire during the 19th century and while those from the current Test-playing nations are testament to that, the game was originally very popular in Ireland (*e.g.*, Arthure 2014: 107, Siggins 2005: 10ff), Canada (Cooper 1999) and the United States (Allardice 2015, Kirsch 1989). In fact, the very first ever international cricket match was contested between the United States and Canada which was played at a venue in Manhattan on 24 September 1844. As late as 1855, the New York press were still devoting more to coverage of cricket than baseball, although and despite the All England Eleven touring both countries in 1859 (Lillywhite 1860), baseball would eventually eclipse cricket in popularity by 1860 (see *e.g.*, Allardice 2015). Club cricket continued actively for a few decades more (Melville 1998: 211ff) even hosting the first West Indies tour in 1886 (Beckles 2006). The later spread of cricket in the Pacific Islands such as Samoa (Akeli 2015) and the Trobriand Islands (*e.g.*, Leach 1988) would result in re-invention of the game rather than an embedding of the imperial code.

The rowing buckle found at the Deacon’s Homestead site shows that the buckles were not confined just to cricket. Rowing was increasing in popularity during the 1870s – 1880s (*e.g.*, Vincent 2004) in the colony, and this overlaps with the later dates of cricket buckles. That buckle was also found alongside the cricket buckle and a Royal Navy button (Figure 4L) and likely associated directly with Thomas Deacon. Deacon had served with the Royal Navy before settling finally at Riverhead, building his home and the first hotel which was a focus of sports and feasts for settlers and Māori in the mid-late 19th century (Cyclopedia of New Zealand 1902: 645). This small set of artefacts therefore encapsulates the colonial ideologies of military, sport, and recreation.

Intriguingly, one of the buckles from Baker’s Flat in Australia discussed earlier, showed a lacrosse player with a registration mark dating to 1868 (Arthure 2014: 72). That

there are far more cricket buckles than other sports made for players and fans across the British colonies and former colonies recovered from the 19th century archaeological record reflects the ideological supremacy of the game at that time.

The distribution of cricket belts and buckles from England into Australia and New Zealand is the story of the spread of British imperial ideology through the medium of the military (see Macdonald 2017: 384–85, Ryan 1996: 57ff). The buckles from the Rings Redoubt and Deacon's Homestead sites have military associations and there are good reasons to associate the growth of cricket with military activities in 19th century New Zealand.

Macdonald (2009: 270) points out that the era of settlement of New Zealand corresponded with the standardisation of the rules and playing of British sports and this was reflected in the manufacturing, selling, and consumption of the associated merchandise. 'Fob medals' and later badges were increasingly prevalent in the late 19th and throughout the 20th century as cricket clubs became more established and their membership grew (see e.g., Studham 2014). These appear to have replaced some of the significance associated with the buckles allowing players and fans to signify their passion for the game.

To date, no identifiably New Zealand-themed buckles have been recovered in excavations although it is possible the 'Victory' example found in Buckle St, Wellington was locally produced. We have been unable to find any examples with overtly NZ subjects or design elements. Given the long history of involvement in cricket, it seems likely that some may have been made here or made for the New Zealand market. We may have to dig up a few cricket grounds and other 19th century sites to find those.

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