

GENERAL

New site, new use for old cottage

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NEW PLYMOUTH'S historic Albuhera Cottage has found a new home . . . and new owners keen to restore it.

The house — plagued by planning debates because of quarrels between the owner and the former New Plymouth City Council, then the New Plymouth District Council, over whether it should be moved from its site — has been moved to the Waiweranui Youth Camp near Rahotu.

It would be turned into bunk rooms and restored according to its original design, Waiweranui Hut Trust chairman Peter Johns said. He hoped to have the cottage weather proofed and looking respectable within two or three months although it was dependant on funding.

The cottage was given to the trust by its owner Peter White-Robinson after he was given permission by the council to have it removed.

On December 11 a gang of periodic detention workers would carefully dismantle the back of the building.

The rest of the cottage would be picked up by crane and transported by truck to the Kahui Rd camp for rebuilding, Mr Johns said.

It would cost "a couple of thousand" to shift it, and it was hoped that because of its historic links, grants could be picked up to restore it, he said.

The cottage is believed to have been built in 1863, the



The 128 year-old Albuhera Cottage will be brought to its former glory at Waiweranui Youth Camp. Pictured above (from left) are Steven Senior, Peter Johns, Bob Senior and Bob MacDonald, all involved in the restoration of the cottage.

Photo: DWAYNE SENIOR

date based on a penny found in the framing of the building. Buildings were not registered at the time so the custom of carpenters was to place a coin or newspaper in buildings listing the current date.

The cottage had some military associations, but there was uncertainty about the authenticity of this historic connections, causing debate between

the owners, council and different historians. A link made with the 57th Regiment was based on findings of 57th Regiment buttons and a shingle surface on the section.

A report from the Taranaki Museum said the Albuhera cottage accurately reflected the living conditions of the majority of 19th century New Plymouth residents and was a

valuable educational aid.

The Waiweranui Youth Camp was set up about eight years ago and had become increasingly popular with schools and youth groups, so more accommodation was needed, Mr Johns said.

It would sleep about 29 at the moment, but by using the cottage the camp would be able to cater for up to 40 people.