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New Zealand Defence Force
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12 June

May 2025

OIA-2025-5402

Dear [REDACTED]

I refer to your email of 21 May 2025 requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), the following information:

I see that the Navy does visits to Pukekohe East Historical Church and are possibly teaching about the history? Under the Official Information Act I would like to request all teaching materials and notes for this visit and information on what is taught.

The visit to Pukekohe East Church was part of a tour of the northern battlefields of the Waikato War of 1863-64 for Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN) HMNZS Philomel personnel. The aims of the tour were to help personnel understand the causes, course and consequences of the Waikato War, and explain the role of maritime operations during that war. The tour was conducted by the Director of the New Zealand Wars Study Centre, a small New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) unit which researches and teaches aspects of the New Zealand Wars to NZDF personnel as a way of enhancing individual and organisational capability. A copy of the teaching notes from this tour are enclosed.

You have the right, under section 28(3) of the OIA, to ask an Ombudsman to review this response to your request. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that responses to official information requests are proactively released where possible. This response to your request will be published shortly on the NZDF website, with your personal information removed.

Yours sincerely

GA Motley

Brigadier

Chief of Staff HQNZDF

Enclosures:

1. The Waikato War – 1863-64: Background reading
2. Northern Waikato Campaign Battlefield Tour
3. Waikato Wars Tour Notes

The Waikato War – 1863-64:

Background reading¹

The Waikato War was the decisive campaign of the New Zealand Wars. It resulted in the dislocation of the Waikato tribal confederation, the confiscation of over 400,000 hectares of Māori land, and the opening of the region to an irreversible tide of European settlement. Its social and political ramifications are still being felt today.

In his final report on the campaign, Deputy Commissary-General Stanley-Jones suggested that ‘the campaign was one of the best prepared and best organised ever undertaken by the British army.’ Most of these preparations involved logistical imperatives – specifically the development of lines of communication and distribution networks, and the naval assets required for littoral and riverine operations.

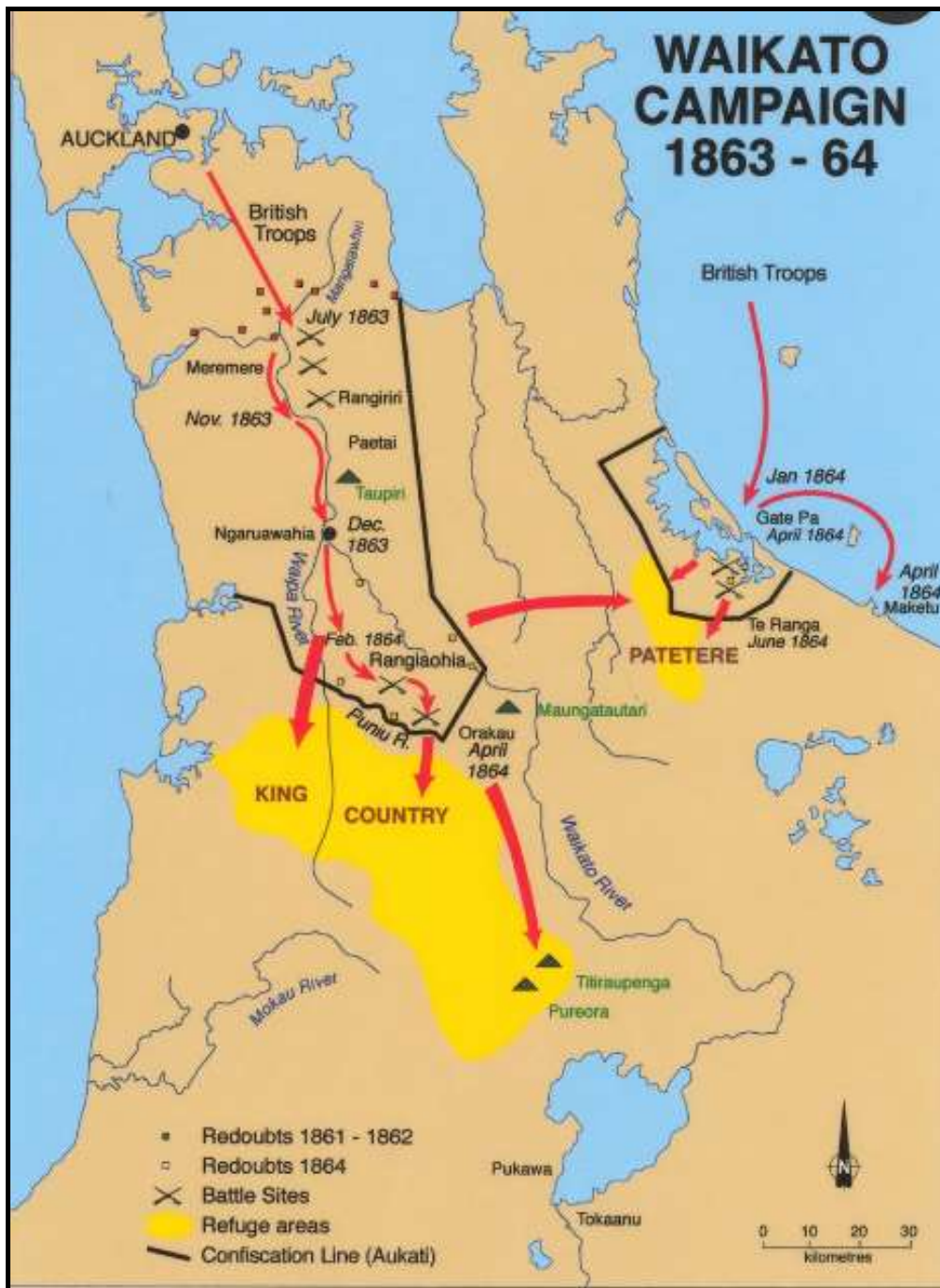
Preparations for war

The Waikato had been the object of colonial ambitions since at least 1855, when the Auckland Provincial Superintendent had advocated ‘look[ing] to the occupation of the Waikato and to the Waipa.’ Māori concerns about increased pākeha expansion into the Waikato, and the resulting loss of land, had been a major factor in the rise of the Kingitanga Movement and the election of the Waikato chief, Te Wherowhero, as the first Māori King. Governor Gore-Browne initially proposed invading the Waikato in early 1861 (during the latter stages of the First Taranaki War), although he was dissuaded on military and political grounds. Instead it was left to his successor, Sir George Grey (who reached New Zealand in September 1861), and the General Officer Commanding the newly-established New Zealand Command, Lieutenant General Duncan Cameron, to plan and execute the invasion.

Although Grey and Cameron subsequently became estranged over the direction of the wars, they appear to have had a good working relationship between 1861 and 1863, and this greatly assisted the preparations for war in the Waikato. Grey’s attempts to gain access to the Waikato had two distinct, but related, aspects. The first, the so-called Peace Policy, included trying to extend European-style administrative and judicial institutions into the Waikato on the one hand, and political manoeuvring to isolate the Kingite tribes and undermine the King as a Māori figurehead on the other. The second aspect, the War Policy, included developing the infrastructure required to support an invasion, and assembling the military resources and personnel to carry it out. The two policies were implemented concurrently, with the intention that if access to the Waikato could not be achieved through

¹ Notes prepared by LTCOL Richard Taylor, Director NZWSC – April 2025.

the Peace Policy, the invasion that had been planned under the War Policy would be carried out.



Cameron began contingency planning for the invasion in April 1861, when he sent a Royal Engineers officer into the Waikato with one of the Native Commissioners to gather information on potential invasion routes. It was clear from the outset that the Waikato River would be the key to the invasion. The river rose in Lake Taupo and flowed north to the Hunua Ranges, and then west to the sea. A major tributary, the Waipa River, joined the

Waikato at Ngāruawāhia. Steamers could potentially deploy on the Waikato as far south as the native village of Pukerimu (modern-day Cambridge), while the deeper, narrower and slower-flowing Waipa was navigable as far south as Te Rore by steamer, and Te Awamutu in smaller craft.

By May 1861, Cameron had identified four possible invasion routes: by sea to the Firth of Thames, then to a landing site 40 kilometres up the Piako River, followed by an overland advance on Ngāruawāhia; by sea to the mouth of the Piako River, followed by a direct overland advance on Ngāruawāhia; by sea to Raglan, then over the Pirongia Range to Ngāruawāhia; or overland from Auckland to the Mangatawhiri Stream, then down the east bank of the Waikato to Ngāruawāhia. The first three routes would each involve a combined (land and sea) operation.

The problem with all four options was the limited land communications in the theatre. While there were adequate roads in the Waipa Basin, the central region between Ngāruawāhia and Mangatawhiri was less promising: the west side of the river was heavily forested, while the well-worn tracks on the eastern bank were inadequate for military use. Even had this not been the case, however, the river would probably still have been the best means of distribution, since waterborne transport has historically been considerably more efficient than land transport.

The development of the lines of communication and logistics infrastructure began with the construction of the Great South Road through south Auckland. During 1861, imperial troops established a redoubt at Drury and improved the road back to their main base at Otahuhu, and in late December began laying a road from Auckland to the Mangatawhiri Stream (the northern boundary of Waikato). The road was made from planks cut from locally-felled trees and laid side-by-side to a width of 6½ metres, and metalled to a width of 5½ metres to make it suitable for year-round military use. By June 1861, it had been completed as far as Pokeno, a few kilometres north of the Mangatawhiri.

Other troops built redoubts and established encampments along the line of the road. Camp Otahuhu and Camp Drury were enlarged and fortified; Queen's Redoubt was built at Pokeno during December 1861, and enlarged and upgraded the following year to include a depot, canteen, commissariat services, and a field hospital; and a small stockade, Bluff Stockade, was built at the junction of the Mangatawhiri Stream and the Waikato River, a few kilometres south of Queen's Redoubt. In addition, in early 1863 a telegraph line was installed from Auckland south. The line reached Drury by the outbreak of war in mid-July 1863; Queen's Redoubt by late November (when it was used to advise Grey in Auckland of the capture of Rangiriri and Ngāruawāhia); and Alexandra (Pirongia) and Te Awamutu a few months after the war.

The Great South Road was completed in March 1863, at a cost of £40,000. A second, less successful, road-building project also deserves mention. In early 1862, Grey offered to pay the friendly Te Awaitaia chief Wiremu Nera to build a road across his tribe's land, from Raglan to Whatawhata. The road would threaten Ngāruawāhia from the rear, and give Cameron an alternative invasion route or a secondary means of supplying an invasion from another direction, if required. Nera agreed to the request, although opposition from within the Kingitanga forced him to commence the road from Crown land at Raglan. The road was unfinished when the war began, but Cameron was still able to use it to supply his army for a period in early 1864.

These roading developments were the first aspect of Cameron's logistical preparations: the second was the development of the distribution network needed to support the invasion. The distribution network spanned two environments: land (horse- and bullock-drawn wagons, and pack horses) and water (steamers, small boats and canoes).

As there were no Military Train units in New Zealand, a new agency, the Commissariat Transport Corps, was established as part of the Commissariat Staff Corps in mid-1861. The first two Transport Corps' companies were formed from personnel transferred from other units, and were based at MacLean's Farm at Penrose. Once work began on the Great South Road, the Transport Corps' establishment was enlarged and restructured. The increased availability of transport helped the road-building programme progress quickly during 1862.

New Zealand's first Navy

The military and colonial authorities also developed a littoral and brown water maritime capability, to provide direct and logistical support to military operations in the Waikato. In May 1861, Commodore Beauchamp Seymour, who as Commodore of the Royal Australian Station was Cameron's senior naval advisor, had recommended the acquisition of at least one steamer. In November 1862, Grey ordered a gunboat steamer (*Pioneer*) from the Australian Steam Navigation Company in Sydney, and purchased the steamer *Avon* in Lyttelton. Two further steamers were ordered from P.N. Russell & Company, of Sydney, in October 1863. *Avon* and *Pioneer* were modified for military service at a commercial foundry at Onehunga, with the installation of armoured turrets mounting single Armstrong guns (one for *Avon* and two for *Pioneer*) and additional iron plates along *Avon*'s bulwarks. The two ships reached the Waikato on 25 July and 3 October 1863 respectively, followed by the Russell-built steamers *Koheroa* in January 1864 and *Rangiriri* in April 1864. The steamers were used for moving troops and supplies, reconnaissance, bombardment of riverbank positions, and transporting prisoners of war and wounded personnel to the rear.

The Government also purchased four coastal sailing cutters for conversion to armoured troop and cargo barges, and had six smaller, flat-bottomed armoured craft ('flats') built for moving supplies. These vessels could either be rowed or towed by the steamers. They and their Royal Naval crews were based at Bluff Stockade, beside the Waikato River south of Pokeno.

A number of other vessels were acquired for coastal operations and transport. The paddle steamer *Tasmanian Maid*, which had served during the First Taranaki War, was purchased by the colonial government in 1863, fitted out as a gunboat, and renamed *Sandfly*. During the Waikato War she transported supplies in support of land operations on the Firth of Thames, and captured a 20-ton Maori cutter, *Éclair*, which was carrying provisions for the Waikato Māori. The government also purchased the coastal schooner *Ruby* (renamed *Caroline*) and leased the steam lighter *Corio* for service on the Hauraki Gulf. The imperial government purchased the paddle steamer *Lady Barkly* and the large screw steamer *Alexandra* in 1863. *Lady Barkly* was used to convey troops, stores and despatches within the Manukau Harbour and between Onehunga and the Waikato Heads (and once up the Waikato River as far as Tuakau), while *Alexandra* was used to transport troops and stores from Onehunga to the Waikato Heads, and during the later Taranaki Wars. Finally, in August the barque *City of Melbourne* was chartered to move stores to the Waikato, and serve as a floating stores depot.

The steamers (including those which were New Zealand-owned) and smaller craft were commanded by Commodore Sir William Wiseman, the new Commodore of the Australasian Squadron, and mainly crewed by Royal Naval personnel from the nine Australasian Squadron warships serving in New Zealand waters.

The invasion of Waikato

The Waikato War began on 12 July 1863, when the vanguard of Lieutenant General Sir Duncan Cameron's army crossed the Mangatawhiri Stream and began preparing positions on high ground on the north-western spur of the Koheroa range. Five days later, the force attacked and dislodged the Maori from their positions on the high ground to the south. The ensuing war included four military phases: operations to clear the invasion and supply routes in the district immediately south of Auckland, between July and October 1863; the capture of Meremere and Rangiriri pa and occupation of Ngāruawāhia (October to December 1863); the advance through the Waipa Basin, culminating in the destruction of the Maori food-basket at Rangiaowhia and the defeat of a large Kingite force at Hairini (January and February 1864); and final operations at Maungatautari and Orākau (March and April 1864).

The first phase of the Waikato War involved two aspects: a series of Kingite guerrilla operations against soft, isolated military and civilian targets and the British distribution network; and the British response. The Kingites had spent at least 18 months preparing for these operations. In late 1861, they had begun developing cultivations at Pukekawa and Paparata to support military operations in the south Auckland district; and in the months before the war they established a large base in heavy bush between Wairoa and Papakura. They also planned for offensive operations against the settlements and supply routes in South Auckland, and probably against Auckland itself. These included riverine operations: when the Auckland Naval Volunteers searched the Mangere and Papakura Creeks immediately after the outbreak of war, they found 18 new canoes, each capable of holding 50-60 men.

The Kingites had also constructed a series of defensive lines at Koheroa, Meremere, and Rangiriri, to dominate the likely invasion route from the north. The positions at Koheroa were neither developed nor garrisoned in strength, but rather were intended for an advanced guard to report on and slow any force crossing the Mangatawhiri. The more powerful depth defences at Meremere and Rangiriri were intended to withstand direct assault, and thereby block an advance upon Ngāruawāhia. They were completed in mid-May, and were 'filled with rifle pits [sic], and covered over with earth, supposed to be shell proof.' Soon after the war began, further positions were commenced around Pāterangi, in the Waipa delta. Having established firm bases with foodstuffs close to hand, Māori were thus able to choose between offensive and defensive measures, or a combination of the two.

On 17 July, the same day that the British captured Koheroa, a Kingite war party attacked a Transport Corps convoy on the Great South Road, between Drury and Queen's Redoubt. This was the start of a three-month guerrilla campaign against convoys, settlers, and farms in the south Auckland district, during which the Māori achieved considerable success. Such was the effectiveness of the guerrilla campaign that Cameron was forced to spend the first three months of the war securing his lines of communications.

To this end all vegetation within 180 metres of the Great South Road was cleared to protect against ambushes; redoubts were established at Rhodes' Clearing, Baird's Farm, and Kerr's Farm (between Queen's Redoubt and Cameron's Headquarters at Drury); a new redoubt (St John's) was built at Papatoetoe; and churches at Pukekohe East and Mauku and farmhouses at Mauku and Waiuku were loopholed and stockaded for defence. The other military posts along the Great South Road were strengthened and fortified, and two major redoubts were constructed on strategic sites on the Waikato: Alexandra Redoubt, to the west of Tuakau; and Whangamarino Redoubt, on the southern end of the Koheroa range, at the confluence of the Whangamarino Stream and Waikato River. In addition, a volunteer unit,

the Forest Rangers, was formed in early August to conduct counter-guerrilla operations in the Hunua Ranges.

Kingite war parties inflicted a series of small but important blows against the farms and distribution network in south Auckland during the first three months of the war. The most significant of these were an attack against the stores depot at Camerontown (half way between the Alexandra redoubt and the Waikato Heads) on 7 September, and an ambush of a major supply column half a kilometre from Martin's Farm redoubt on 16 September. The only Kingite defeat during this phase of the war occurred at Pukekohe East Church on 14 September, when between 170 and 200 warriors attacked a stockaded force of 17 Militia, and were repulsed with heavy losses.

The initial success of the Māori guerrilla operations forced Cameron to halt his advance while he secured his lines of communication, awaited the arrival of reinforcements, and assembled his river flotilla.

From the end of September, however, the Kingites abandoned guerrilla warfare for a pa-based defensive strategy. The change in strategy has been explained variously in terms of the introduction of the steamers and supporting troop and cargo vessels; the arrival of the Waikato Militia, which freed up imperial troops for the front line; and even an apparent change of heart by Maori over the use of guerrilla tactics. (One Māori veteran subsequently claimed that: 'Our War Councillors particularly enjoined us not to indulge in potting, saying that war is not won by killing stragglers.')

Whatever the reasons for the change in strategy, it proved to be a watershed, in that the removal of the Māori threat to the British supply lines enabled the latter to regain the initiative. By mid-October, the gunboats *Avon* and *Pioneer* had arrived, and the Transport Corps had stockpiled two months' worth of stores at the Queen's Redoubt in preparation for renewed operations. Cameron was now ready to resume the offensive.

The second phase of the Waikato War, the British advance to the confluence of the Waikato and Waipa Rivers, included the outflanking and capture of Meremere pa, the attack against and capture (in controversial circumstances) of Rangiriri pa, and the occupation of the Kingite capital, Ngāruawāhia. At Ngāruawāhia, Cameron established his headquarters on the site of the King's former home at the confluence of the Waikato and Waipa Rivers, with a major Commissariat depot, a small shipyard, a smithy, a carpenter's shop, and light repair facilities.

The third phase of the Waikato War, in January and February 1864, included the British advance through the Waipa Basin, the capture of the Maori food baskets of Rangiaowhia and Kihikihi, and the decisive defeat of the Kingite army at Hairini.

On 27 December 1863, Cameron's army marched 22 kilometres from Ngāruawāhia to Whatawhata, followed by *Avon* with the field force's supplies and equipment. On New Year's

Day, the army advanced a further five kilometres to Tuikaramea, where the Raglan track met the Waipa River. By mid-February 1864, Cameron's army was postured before Pāterangi, a series of four mutually-supporting pa blocking the northern approaches to Te Awamutu and the food baskets to the south. The most powerful positions ever constructed by the Māori in New Zealand, they were defended by a garrison of 2000 warriors and provisioned by convoys of pack horses operating from Rangiaowhia and the surrounding district. Another pa at Ohaupo, to the east, blocked the overland route from Kirikiriroa (Hamilton).

Determined to avoid another costly assault, Cameron chose to outflank Pāterangi and strike against its food basket, Rangiaowhia. During the night of 20-21 February, a 1000-strong force of imperial troops, Forest Rangers and CDF cavalry flanked Pāterangi to the west, and after a silent march reached Rangiaowhia at dawn. Following a confused action in which five soldiers and 12 Maori were killed, the troops seized the village and its extensive cultivations, and then fell back to Te Awamutu. The Maori abandoned Pāterangi the following morning.

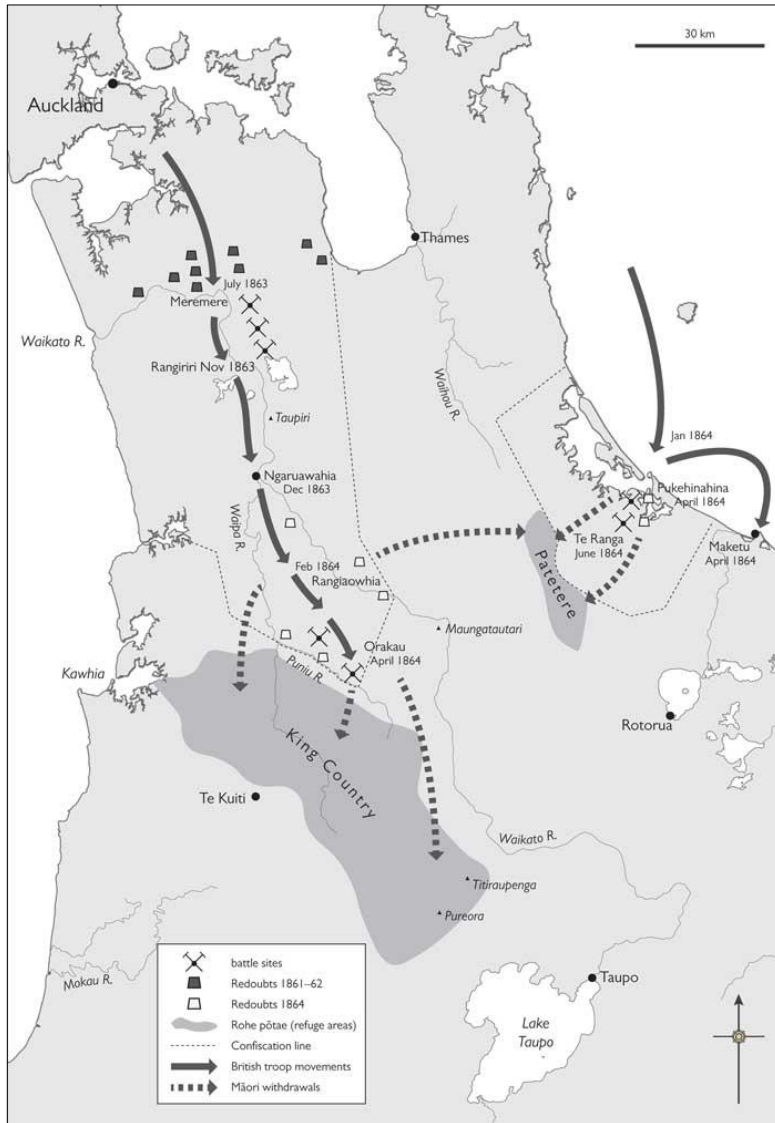
During the morning of 22 February, more than 500 of the former defenders of Pāterangi began preparing entrenchments on Hairini Ridge, between Rangiaowhia and Te Awamutu. As soon as he heard of the development, Cameron despatched a force of 1200 men, with artillery, from Te Awamutu to clear the ridge and destroy the Māori force. This action effectively ended the Waikato War, although there was still one more drama – the battle of Orakau – to play out.

The final phase of the Waikato War, during March and April 1864, saw a dramatic but futile 'last stand' by a multi-tribal force led by Rewi Maniapoto at Orākau, and the final dislocation of Ngāti Haua from Maungatautari and Maungakawa, and the consolidation of the British position in the Waipa district.

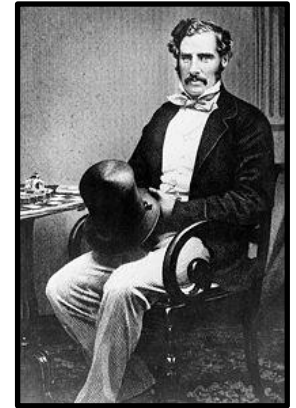
At Orākau (31 March – 2 April 1864), a force of 300 Maori, including women and children, repelled a series of attacks on the afternoon of 31 March, before the British laid siege to the pa and began digging a sap towards it. On the third day of the siege, Cameron called on the defenders to surrender: they refused, and later that day abandoned the pa and fled through the British lines to the Puniu Stream, a few kilometres to the south. Large numbers were killed during the pursuit by the colonial troops (the imperial troops took no part in the chase). In all, 160 Maori were killed and 50 were wounded at Orākau.

As noted earlier, the invasion of Waikato was the decisive campaign of the New Zealand Wars. By striking with such effect against the Kingite tribes and dispossessing them of their land and resources, the British had effectively destroyed the centre of gravity of the Maori resistance, and thereby fatally undermined the ability of Maori to reverse the tide of colonial expansion.

NORTHERN WAIKATO CAMPAIGN BATTLEFIELD TOUR



King Tawhiao



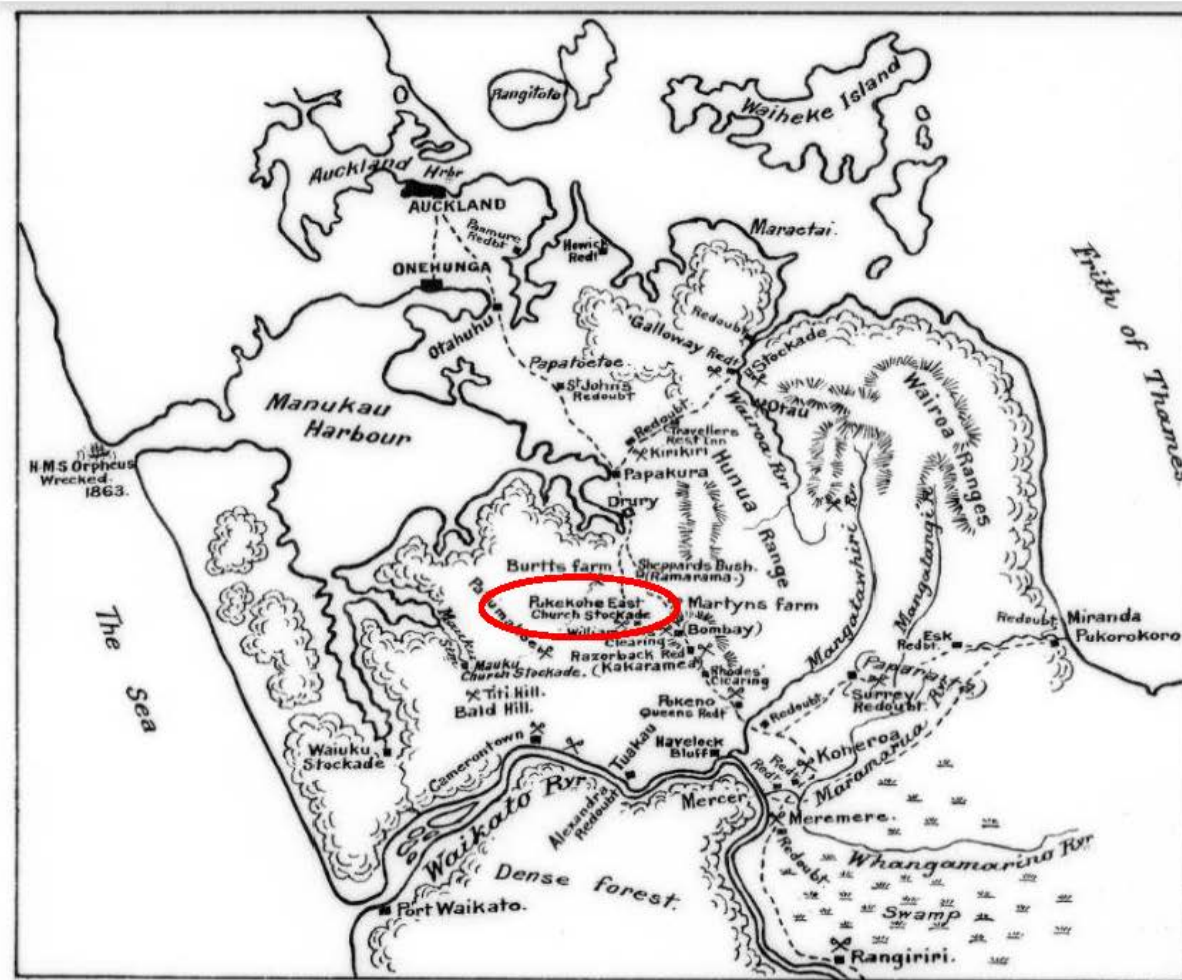
Governor George Grey



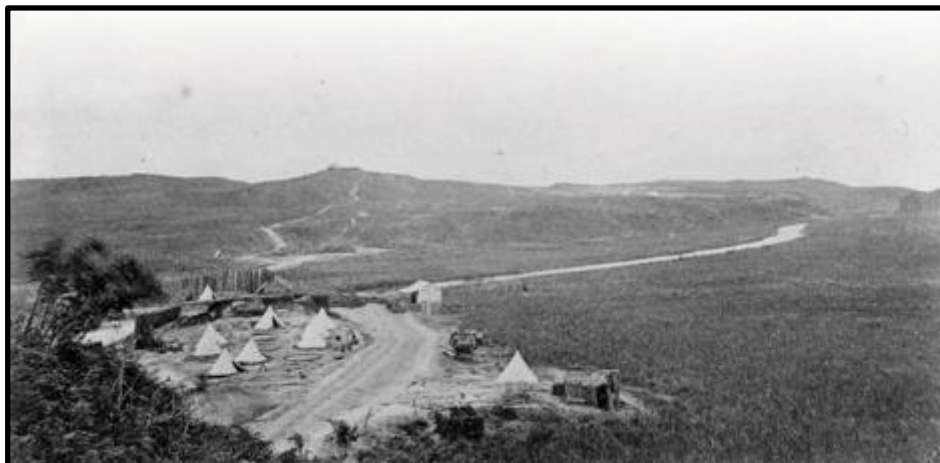
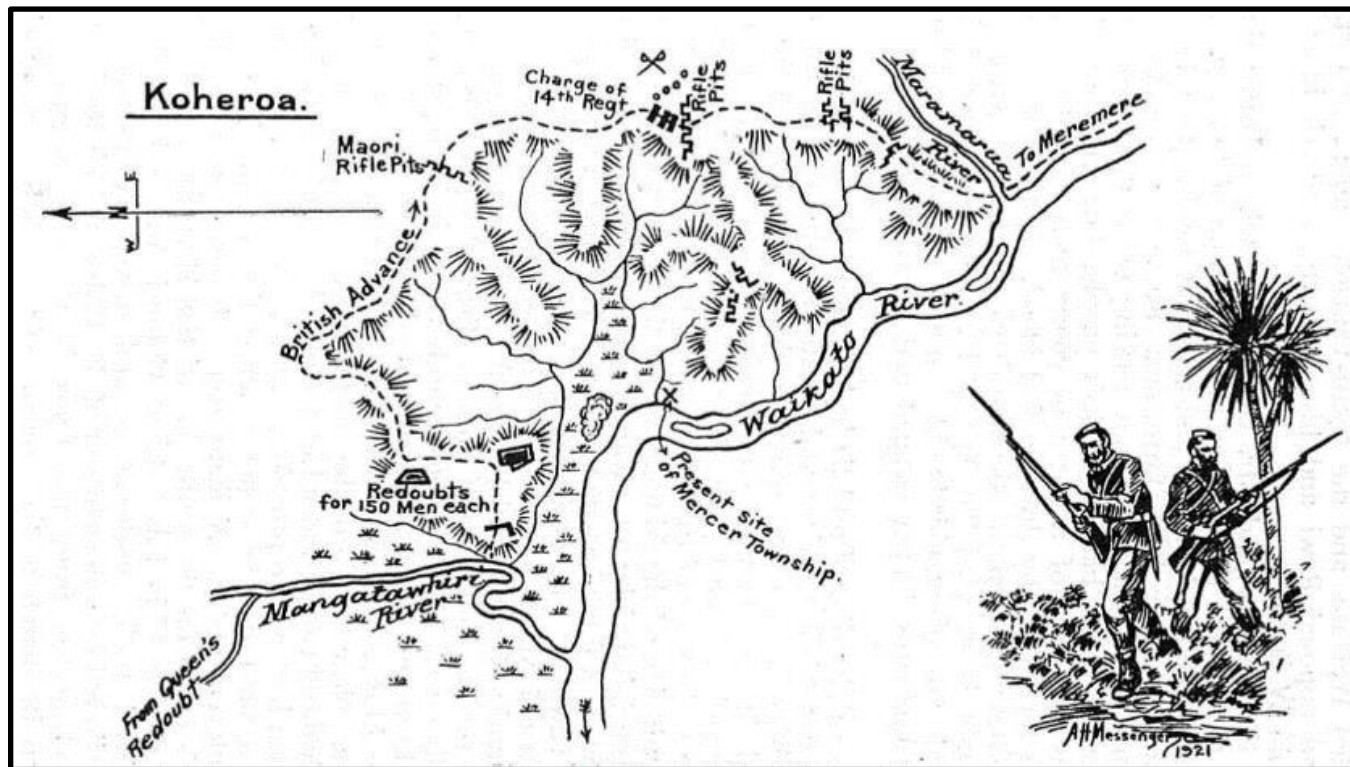
Wiremu Tamehana



Lt Gen Duncan Cameron



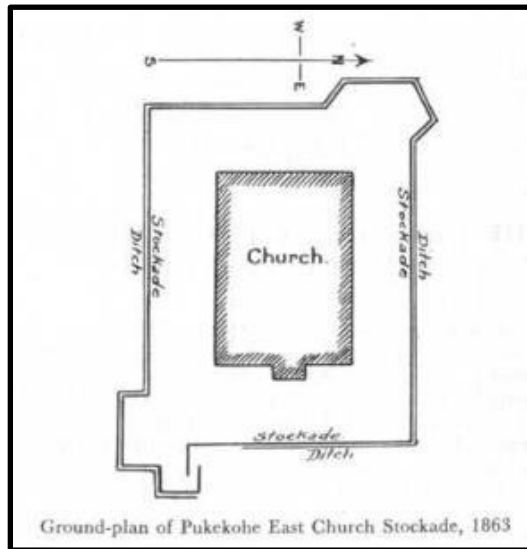
July – October 1863: Invasion and bush-clearing operations.



12 Jul 63: British forces cross the Mangatawhiri Stream: invasion begins.

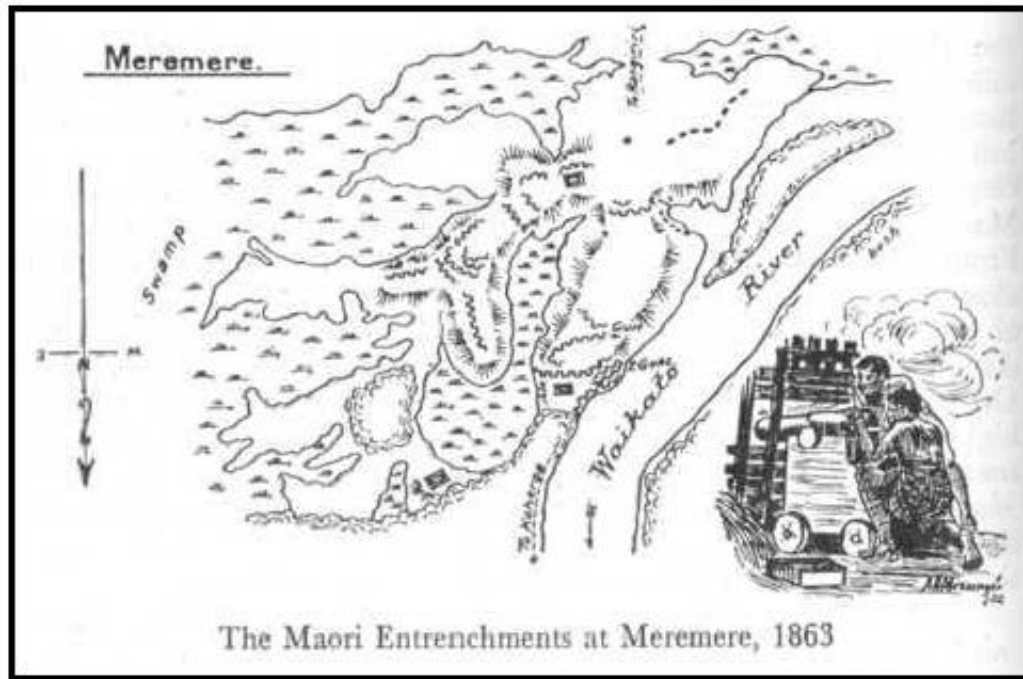
17 Jul 63: Battle of Koheroa.

Looking east from Naval camp at Mangatawhiri Stream. Heights in the background.



14 Sep 63: Pukekohe East Church/stockade attacked

29 Oct – 1 Nov 63: Capture of Meremere



RBL 40-pounder gun

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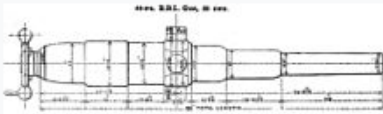


Diagram from 'Treatise on Service Ordnance' (HMSO), 1877

Type	Naval gun Fortification gun
Place of origin	United Kingdom
Service history	
In service	1860s – 1900?
Used by	United Kingdom Australian colonies
Wars	New Zealand Wars Bombardment of Kagoshima

Production history

Designer	W.G. Armstrong Co.
Manufacturer	W.G. Armstrong Co. Royal Gun Factory
Produced	1859 – 1863
No. built	1013 ^[1]
Variants	32cwt, 35cwt

Specifications

Mass	32 cwt (3,584 pounds (1,626 kg)), later 35 cwt (3,920 pounds (1,780 kg)) gun & breech ^[2]
Barrel length	106.3 inches (2.700 m) bore & chamber ^[2]
Shell	40 pounds 2 ounces (18.20 kg) ^[2]
Calibre	4.75-inch (120.6 mm) ^[2]
Breech	Armstrong screw with vertical sliding vent-piece (block)
Muzzle velocity	1,180 feet per second (360 m/s) ^[3]

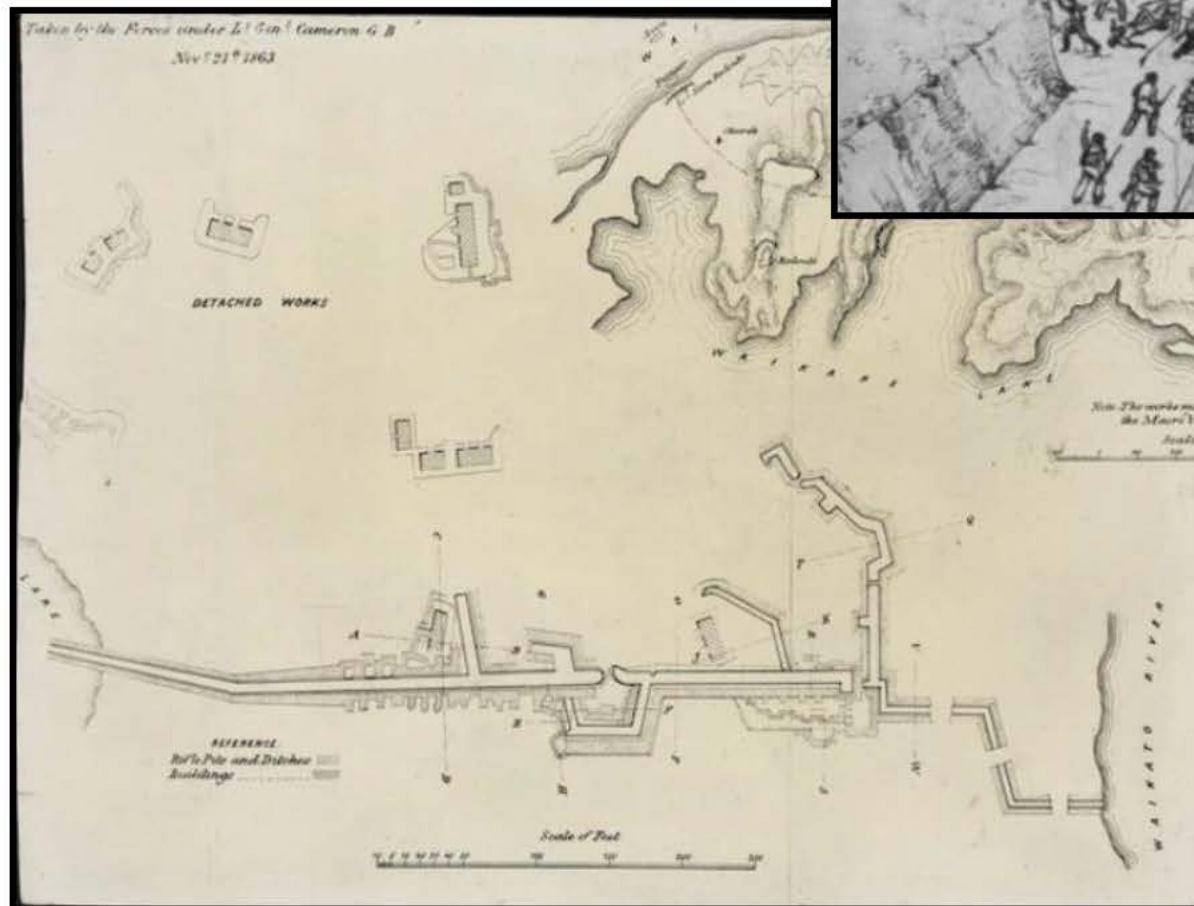


40 Pounder Armstrong Guns firing on Meremere Pa from Whangamarino

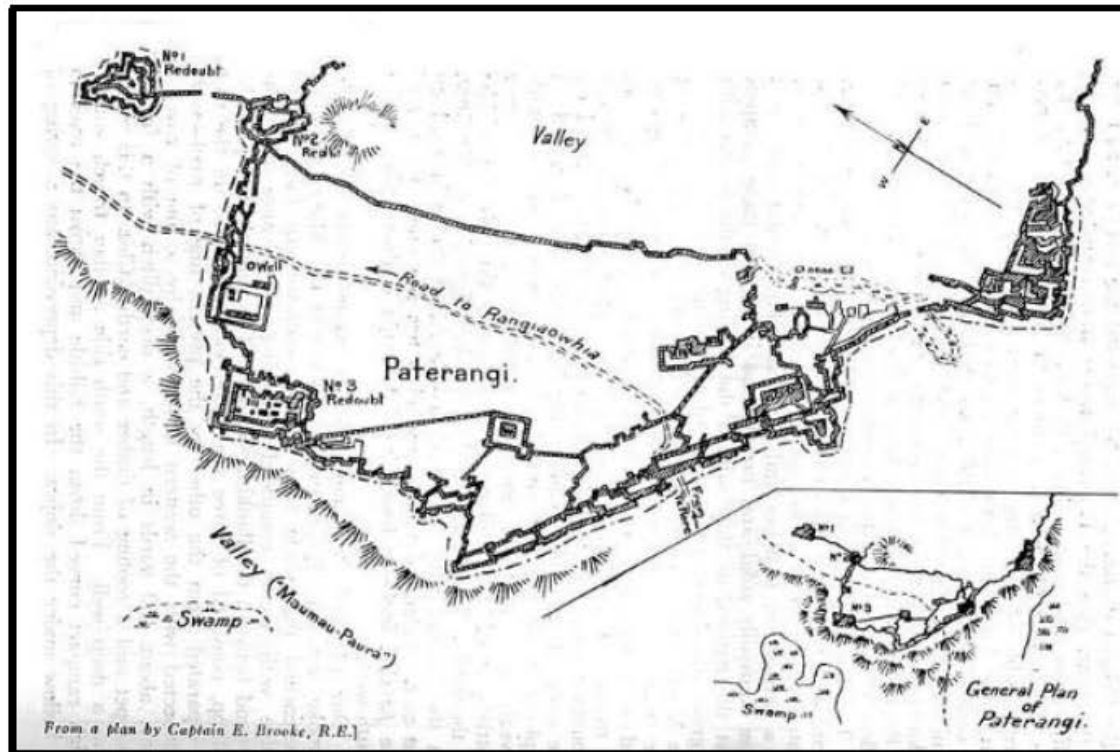


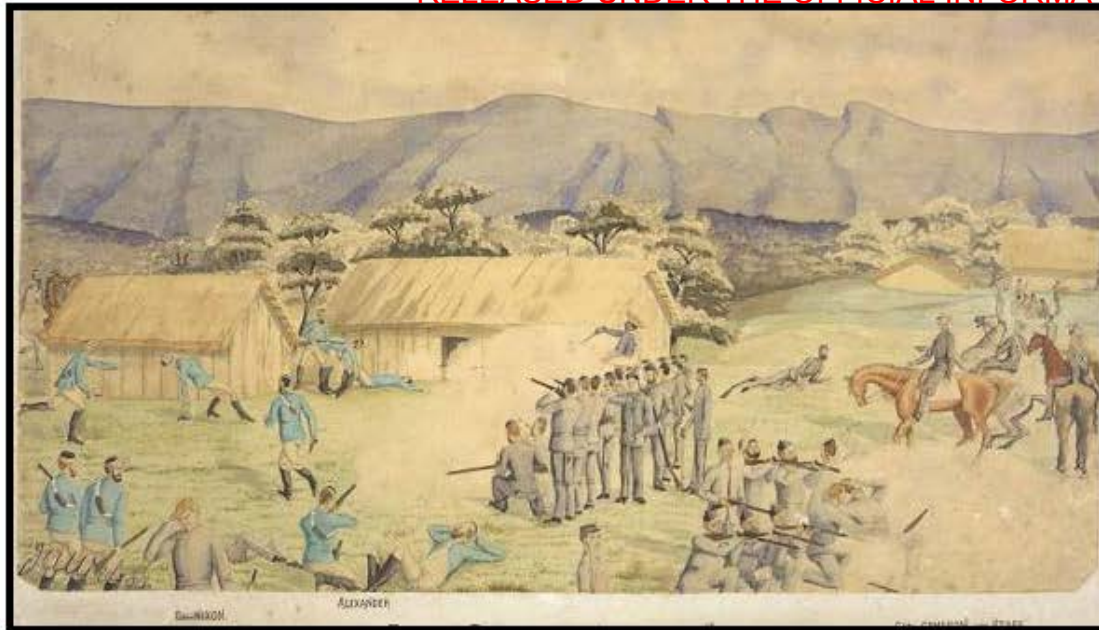
40 pdr Range: 3,800 yds= 4.4km
Range to Meremere approx 2.9km

20 Nov 63: The Battle of Rangiriri



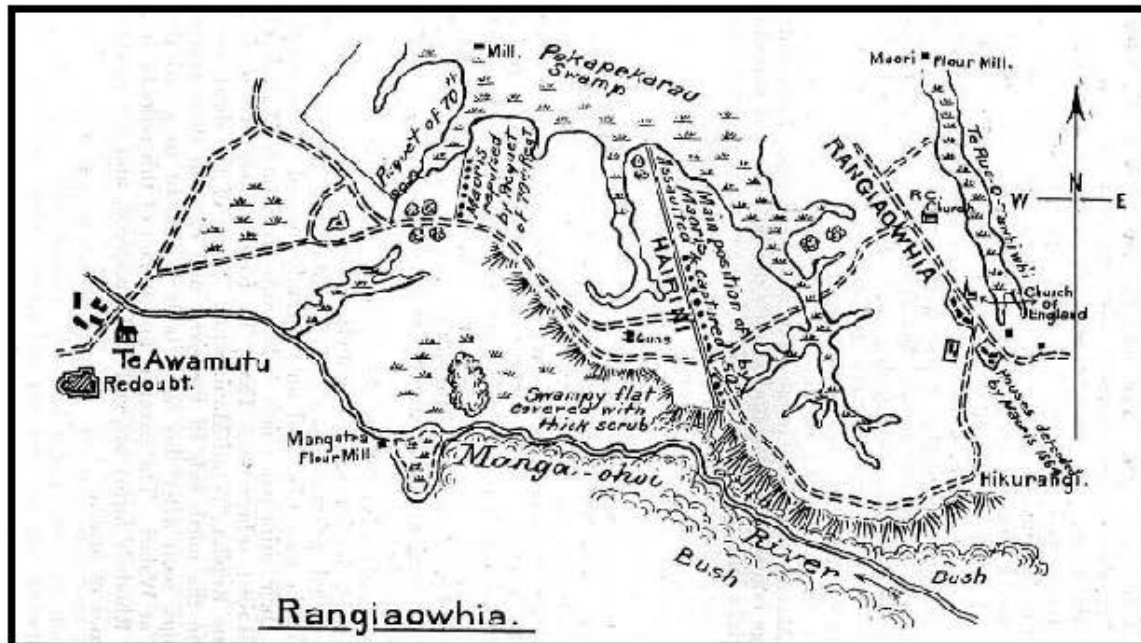
Paterangi: the Kingites' 4th defensive line





21 Feb 64: Rangiaowhia

22 Feb 64: Hairini



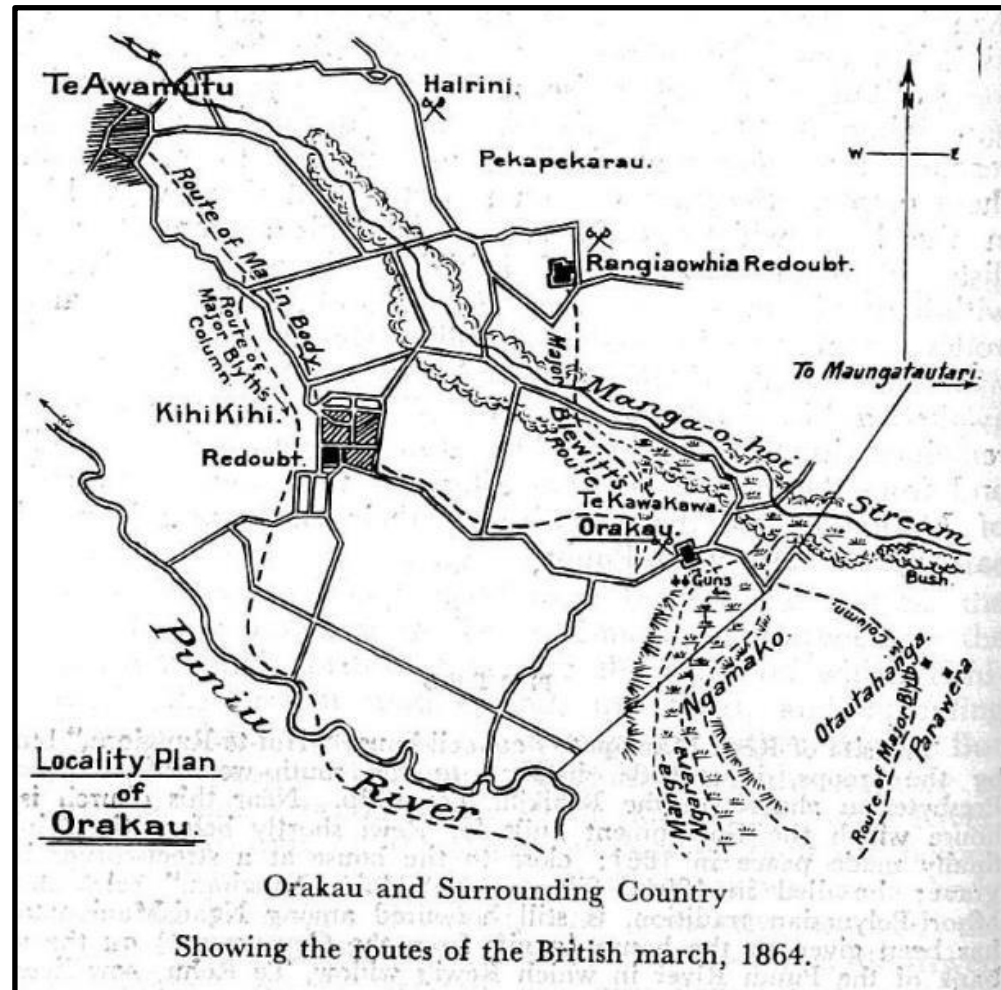
Wahanui Huatere
(Ngati Maniapoto)
wounded at Hairini

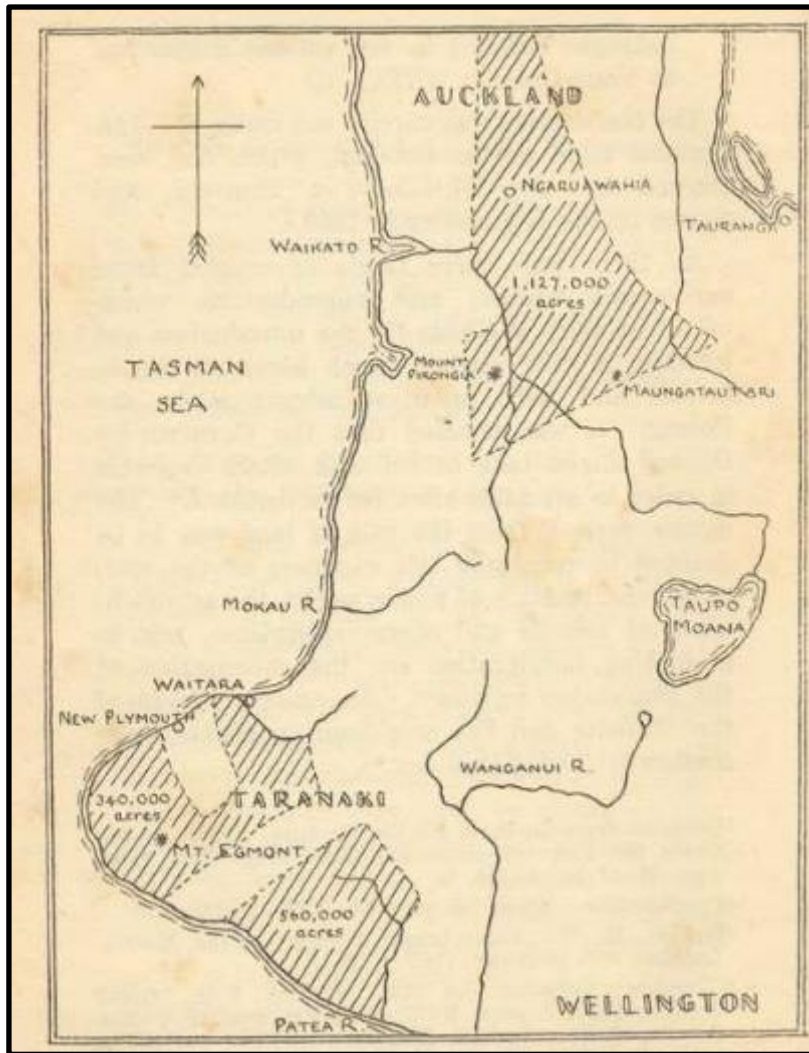


Rewi Maniapoto

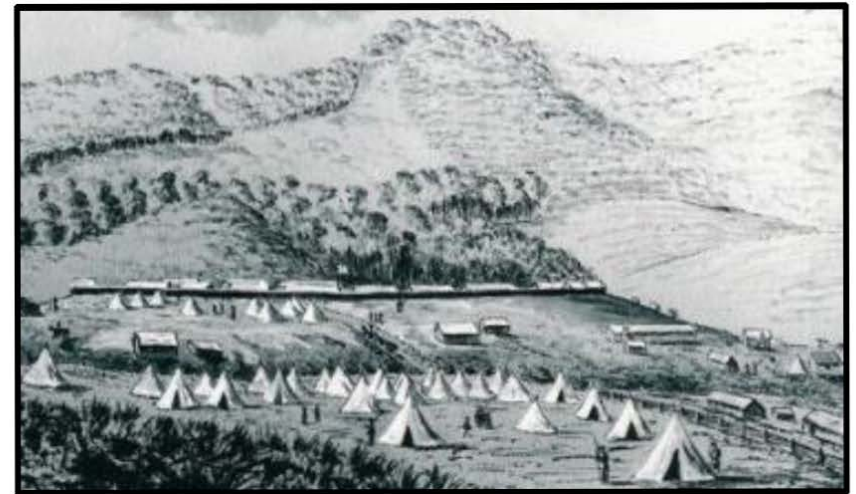
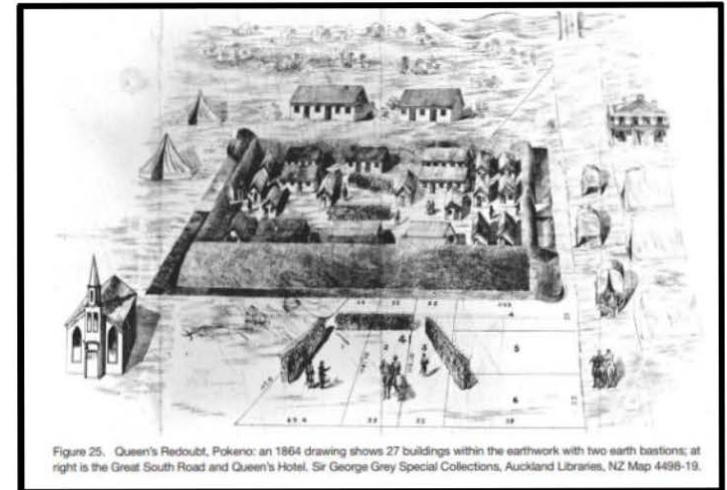
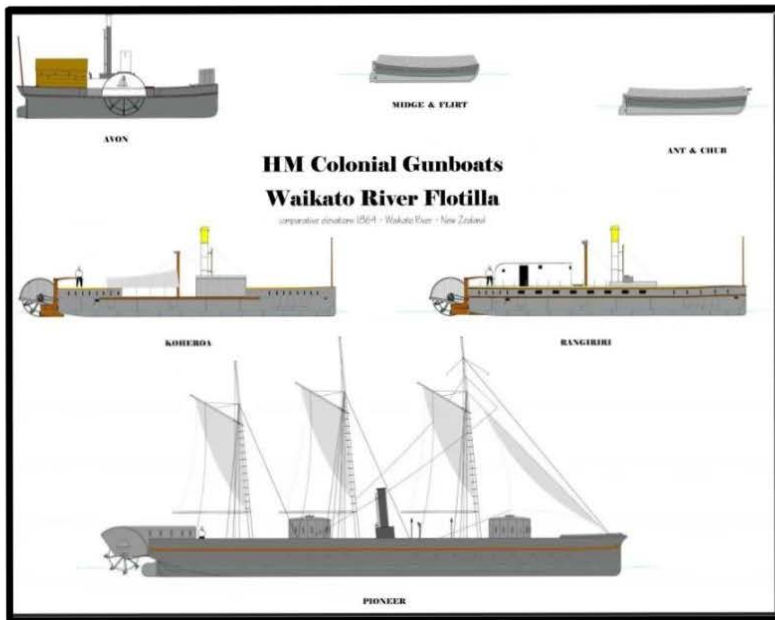


31 Mar – 2 Apr 64: Battle of Orakau





Map showing the Territory confiscated in the Waikato, the Province of Taranaki and near Wanganui under the New Zealand Land Settlements Act, 1863.



Waikato Wars Tour Notes

Introduction

- Treaty 1840
- War in the North
- Population growth
- South Auckland settlement
- Maori King movement
- Taranaki War
- Govt decision to INVADE the Waikato:
 - Maori military power
 - Maori independence and self- determination
- GOV Grey's:
 - Peace Policy
 - War policy
- Great South Road
- Military settlements
- An armed frontier
- Native Settlements Act
- Confiscation Line: Raglan- Tauranga
- Auckland under threat?
- Whitaker
- Russell
- Maori ejected from South Auckland
- War behind the lines

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- Forest Rangers
- Logistics, Camerontown
- Flotilla

STAND: PUKEKOHE EAST CHURCH

Invasion begins

- 11 Jul 63: Proclamation released calling for Maori to swear allegiance or leave the district.
- 12 Jul 1863: Mangatawhiri River crossed below Koheroa Heights: two redoubts throw up.
- 12 Jul 63: Battle of Koheroa. Engagement last a few hours, resulting in Maori being cleared from the ridge as far as the Whangamarino Redoubt.
- Meanwhile Maori have commenced guerrilla operations in south Auckland district. Lasts until the end of October.

Pukekohe East Church 14 Sep 1863

- Loopholed church 30 x 15 feet
- Attacked from direction of Pukekohe
- Trench 6 feet wide, 3-4 feet deep. Stockade 10 feet from church. Incomplete.
- Had been skirmishing a week earlier; some deaths

- Day before- a party of 4 soldiers/ militia chased, fired upon and ran into bush. 2 remained in bush overnight, 2 rushed to the stockade. Provided a warning.
- 14 Sep:
 - Men cleaning weapons
 - Shots fired
 - Hadn't cleared bush far enough back
 - 17 defenders: Volunteers and Settlers
 - 200+ Maori. Shoot at sentry
 - Fix bayonets
 - First reinforcements arrive 1300: 30 men 70th Regt
 - 1600: 150 men 18th Royal Irish Regt arrive
 - Maori in trees
 - Fight for a further hour

Casualties:

- Maori- 40 killed?
- British: 3 soldiers KIA, 8 WIA
- Settlers: none