



# Heritage Assessment: Ruapekapeka Pa and Battlefield

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Cover Image: Waharoa at the entrance of the pa carved by Te Warihi Hetaraka (photo credit:  
Department of Conservation)

Image this page: Department of Conservation

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## Site Overview

It is difficult to overstate the significance of Ruapekapeka Pa and Battlefield. The battle in 1845/6 was the culmination of the War of the North, when Maori stood against the might of the British Empire. It was an armed response to the Treaty of Waitangi, seeking to prevent the erosion of Maori mana. Ruapekapeka is the best preserved of all the New Zealand Wars sites, a tangible connection to events which shaped New Zealand society as it is today.<sup>1</sup>

The Ruapekapeka Historic Reserve is accessed by a gravel road off State Highway 1, about 35 km north of Whangarei. Nine and half hectares in size, the reserve encompasses the pa itself, the British forward position, and part of the British main camp. The pa and British forward position are mown on a regular basis, and the reserve boasts a sealed car park, formed tracks, interpretation signs, and a beautiful carved waharoa (entranceway).

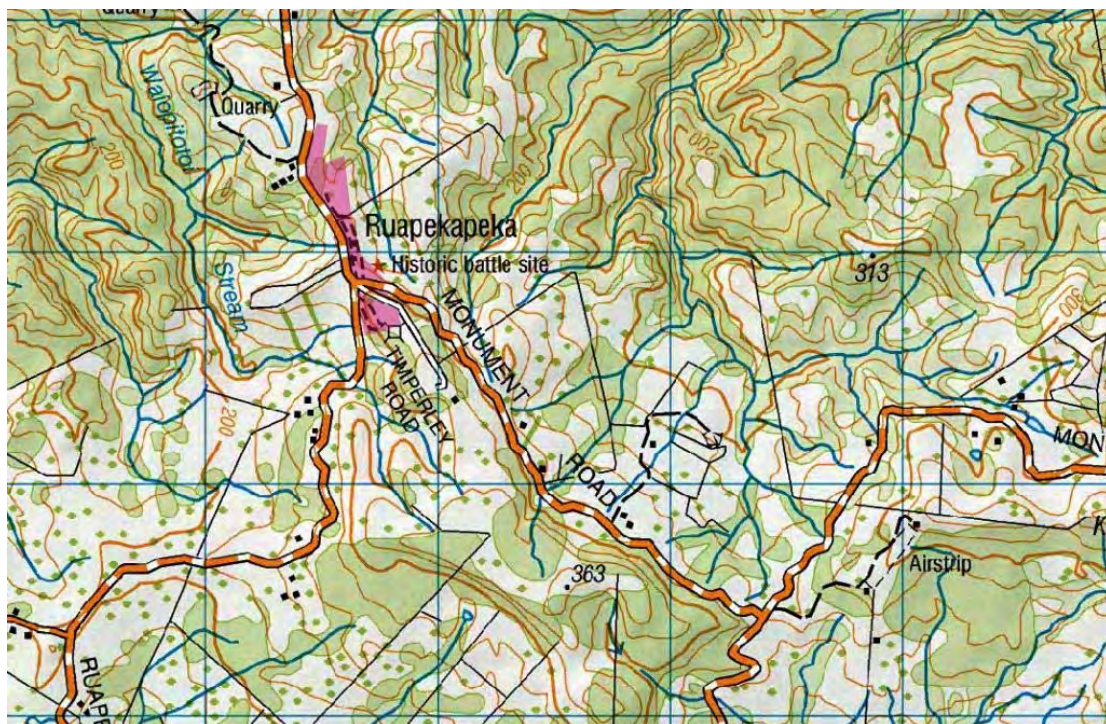


Figure 1: Location Map

## History

At the beginning of 1846, a small army of British soldiers, sailors, and Maori allies set up a camp in a rugged and isolated spot not far from Kawakawa. The heavy artillery at their disposal included three massive 32-pounder cannons, which were aimed at the top of a knoll to the south-east of the camp. The target: Ruapekapeka Pa, a formidable fortification built by the military genius Te Ruki Kawiti and manned by fierce Ngapuhi warriors. On January 10, the British focussed all of their firepower on the northwest corner of the pa:

*When all had been got ready, the soldiers began to fire in earnest – rockets, mortars, ship guns, long brass guns – all burst out firing at once. We were almost*

<sup>1</sup> D. Green. 2010. *Battlefields of the New Zealand Wars: A Visitor Guide*. p. 43; J. Gardiner. 1983. Ruapekapeka Pa Historic Reserve: Management Plan Proposal.

*deaf with the noise, and the air was full of cannon balls. The fence of the pa began to disappear like a bank of fog before the morning breeze.*<sup>2</sup>

The roots of the conflict can be traced back to the moment Captain Cook set foot upon New Zealand shores. Events which triggered outright war relate to the political and economic situation after the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840. In short, the new colonial government made decisions which had negative impacts upon the lives of Northland Maori. Kororareka (Russell) went into decline when the capital was shifted to Auckland: it was no longer a lively, raucous hub of commercial opportunities for Maori. In addition, the Chiefs were prohibited from charging anchorage fees, and restrictions were placed on the felling of certain types of timber.<sup>3</sup> Basically, the British attempted to impose their own sovereignty without regard for existing chiefly authority.<sup>4</sup> The influential Chief Hone Heke summarised the situation in an eloquent manner when he went to visit his distant relative, Te Ruki Kawiti:

*He bought with him a mere<sup>5</sup> smeared with human dung. No explanation was needed, the meaning was obvious. Someone had defiled the mana of Ngapuhi and such a challenge must be met!*<sup>6</sup>

The name Hone Heke is synonymous with the War in the North, but Te Ruki Kawiti played an equally important role. The two men were quite different: Kawiti was of an older generation, wiser and more experienced. Heke's character has been described as a "mingling of passionate patriotism, ambition, bravado, vanity, and ... shrewdness".<sup>7</sup> He was also fair-minded, and at first he sought peaceful solutions to the perceived problem of government interference.<sup>8</sup>

Against a background of growing discontent, Heke directed his attention to the Union Jack flying atop the flagstaff at Kororareka. He recognised the flagstaff as a symbol of British sovereignty, and in July 1844 he chopped it down. In March 1845 Heke attacked the flagstaff for the forth time, and Kawiti lead a co-ordinated attack on the troops guarding the town.<sup>9</sup> The British were defeated and driven out of the town, despite the presence of the army and the Royal Navy.<sup>10</sup>

The causes of the War in the North cannot, of course, be condensed into a few sentences. For one thing, it was not a straight forward case of Maori vs. the Crown. A faction of Nga Puhi led by Tamiti Waka Nene (and others) fought alongside the British, which remains something of a delicate subject among Northland Maori today.<sup>11</sup> Historian Ralph Johnson emphasises that these men were not "loyalists" to the Crown. Many of them agreed that the government was not honouring the Treaty of Waitangi (Te Tiriti).<sup>12</sup> However, they disagreed with Heke's reaction, believing that cutting down

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<sup>2</sup> F. E. Manings, 1862. p. 42.

<sup>3</sup> J. Belich. 1988. *The New Zealand Wars*. Penguin Books. p. 30-34; J. Cowan. 1922. *The New Zealand Wars and the Pioneering Period* (vol. 1). p. 15-16. R. Johnson, 2006. *The Northern War 1844-1846*. p. 22.

<sup>4</sup> R. Johnson. 1996. p. 22-23.

<sup>5</sup> A mere is a short flat weapon.

<sup>6</sup> T. Kawiti. 1956. Heke's War in the North. *Te Ao Hou* 16 p. 38.

<sup>7</sup> J. Cowan. 1922. p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> J. Belich. 1988. p. 30-33.

<sup>9</sup> T. Kawiti. 1956 p. 39-40; Belich, J. 1988. p. 36-41.

<sup>10</sup> J. Belich. 1988. p. 37.

<sup>11</sup> See J. Belich. 1988. p. 30-35.

<sup>12</sup> R. Johnson. 1996. p. 213-220.

the flagstaff contravened the tapu surrounding Te Tiriti.<sup>13</sup> There were also grave concerns that Heke had aspirations of becoming the most powerful Ngapuhi chief.<sup>14</sup>

On 8 May 1845 British forces attacked Heke at his incomplete pa at Puketutu, withdrawing after fierce skirmishes on open ground.<sup>15</sup> A few months later Heke suffered his first defeat, but it was not at the hands of the British. Te Taohui and Tamiti Waka Nene attacked Heke's pa at Te Ahuahua, and Heke was defeated and severely wounded.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, Kawiti focussed his attention on the pa of his ally Peni Tau, located at Oheawai. Kawiti and Peni Tau united to transform the pa into a formidable fortress, incorporating many of the defensive features later seen at Ruapekapeka.

The battle at Oheawai was an unmitigated disaster for the British. Their commander was Colonel Despard who is remembered, perhaps unfairly, as an incompetent blustering fool.<sup>17</sup> He ordered a frontal assault which was (in retrospect) doomed from the outset. Oheawai Pa was fortified with two rows of timber palisades with loopholes in the base for directing musket fire. Projections in the perimeter allowed flanking fire to be directed at the attackers as they struggled to breach the defences.<sup>18</sup> Within minutes, 34 members of the storming party were dead and 70 injured.<sup>19</sup> From a survivor:

*The whole front of the pa flashed fire, and in a moment we were in the one-sided fight ... Not a single Maori could we see. They were all safely hidden in their trenches and pits, poking the muzzles of their guns under the foot of the outer palisade. What could we do?*<sup>20</sup>

Kawiti and his warriors set out to build a new pa at Ruapekapeka. Tools were brought from Kororareka, and two cannons were brought up the river on canoes and hauled overland.<sup>21</sup> Kawiti chose a knoll with steep slopes on three sides, surrounded by thick puriri forest. Ruapekapeka was a "remarkable fortress and a masterpiece of military engineering."<sup>22</sup> The outer defences were similar to those at Oheawai: a double-row of massive puriri palisades and a rifle trench around the perimeter designed to prevent enfilading fire.<sup>23</sup> The interior defences were even stronger; there were deep holes all over with bombproof covers of timber and earth, tunnels, breastworks and cross fences.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> R. Johnson. 1996. p. 213-221.

<sup>14</sup> R. Johnson. 1996. p. 216.

<sup>15</sup> J. Belich. 1988. p. 41-44.

<sup>16</sup> J. Belich. 1988. p. 45-46.

<sup>17</sup> e.g. J. Cowan. 1922. p. 58; *The New Zealander*, Saturday 24 January 1846; Manings. F. E. 1862. *History of the War in the North of New Zealand against the Chief Heke in the year 1845*. p. 41. For an alternative viewpoint see J. Belich. 1988. p. 47-54.

<sup>18</sup> There is a detailed description of the pa at Oheawai in J. Cowan. 1922. p. 49-52.

<sup>19</sup> See R. Johnson. 1996. p. 308.

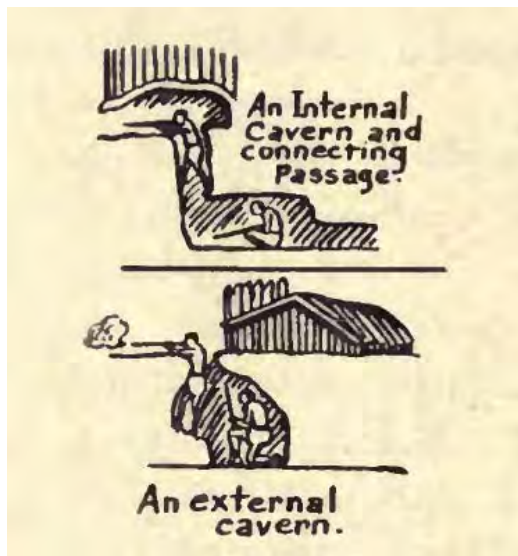
<sup>20</sup> As told by Lieutenant W. Free, quoted in Cowan 1922 p. 61.

<sup>21</sup> T. Kawiti. 1956. p. 42.

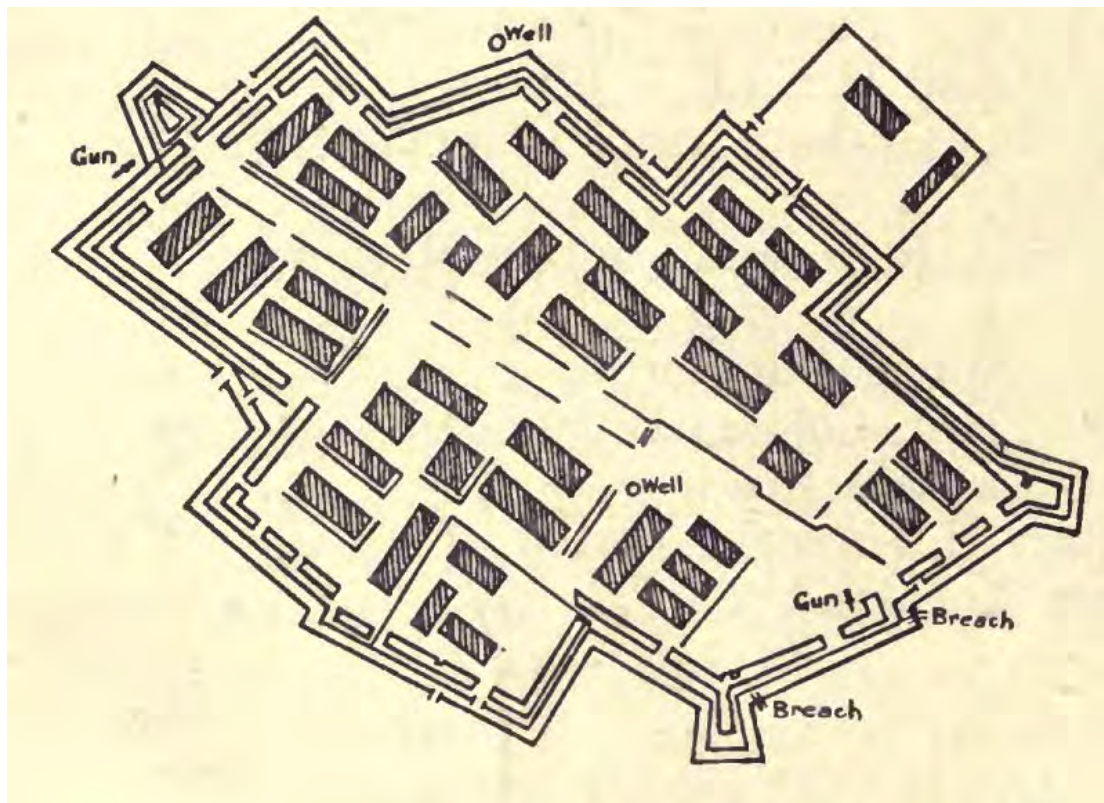
<sup>22</sup> R. Johnson. 1996. p. 364.

<sup>23</sup> The rifle trench had earthen banks projecting inwards from alternating sides, leaving a gap big enough for the defenders to move from one part of the trench to another. This prevented an attacker from standing at one end of the trench and firing down its entire length.

<sup>24</sup> Diary of C. Bridge, 11 January 1845.



**Figure 2:** Cross section of the palisades and firing trenches from Cowan 1922.



**Figure 3:** Plan of Ruapekapeka from Cowan 1922; note the 2 wells.

Meanwhile, Despard and the newly-appointed Governor Grey began to organise the third British expedition inland. The purpose: to meet Kawiti at Ruapekapeka.<sup>25</sup> The force assembled was the largest yet, comprising 800 regulars, 60 volunteers from Auckland, a naval brigade of nearly 400, and 80 sailors and artillerymen from the East

<sup>25</sup> J. Belich. 1988. p. 58.



India Company.<sup>26</sup> Tamati Waka Nene bought along about 400 Ngapuhi warriors.<sup>27</sup> In contrast, the defenders of the pa numbered only 300 to 400.<sup>28</sup>

The British assembled an impressive arsenal: three 32-pounders, one eighteen-pounder, two twelve-pounders, and assorted lighter pieces including mortars. It took three weeks to get everybody up to the site of the battle:

*Taking the guns up to Ruapekapeka, was a feat not accomplished without difficulty and hard work, the landing and getting the thirty-two pounders up a perpendicular hill being in itself quite an undertaking. They were afterwards moved fourteen miles over the most hilly county it has ever been my fate to travel, without a particle of road, and passing thorough a dense wood.*<sup>29</sup>

Just before Christmas the British began to arrive at Ruapekapeka. They set up camp and established three firing positions. The first was at the main camp, housing one of the 32-pounders and two smaller guns. The second battery, which housed two of the 32-pounders and four mortars, was about 400 yards from the pa and a stockade was built to defend it.<sup>30</sup> The third battery was in a more advanced position, covering the right flank of the pa. The British begun to fire upon the pa from their arrival, but it took some days to get all of the guns into position. On 10 January the work was complete, and Despard ordered all of the guns and rockets to open fire at once. The outer defences, robust as they were, could not withstand prolonged and concerted attention from the British cannons. By the end of the day the British could see a considerable breach in the defences.<sup>31</sup>

On Sunday 11 January the British stormed the breach, but only after scouts had determined the pa was all-but-deserted. Kawiti's troops were in the area behind the pa, accompanied by Heke and his men who had only just arrived. An oft-repeated explanation has them resting or at prayer (in contrast with the impiety of the attacking forces). Historian James Belich dismisses the Sunday prayers story.<sup>32</sup> He argues that Heke and Kawiti intended to lure the attackers through the pa and into an ambush in the forest behind. Ralph Johnson offers a different explanation: that the pa was in the process of being evacuated when the British entered, and that the firing positions in the forest were for protecting the rear of the party during the withdrawal<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> J. Belich. 1988. p. 59.

<sup>27</sup> See R. Johnson 1996. p. 362.

<sup>28</sup> R. Johnson 1996. p. 362.

<sup>29</sup> H. F. McKillop. 1849. *Reminiscences of twelve months' services in New Zealand*.

<sup>30</sup> Col. Despard's despatch. 5 Jan 1846.

<sup>31</sup> Diary of Major Cyp. Bridge, 10 January 1846.

<sup>32</sup> James Belich. 1988. p. 62-64.

<sup>33</sup> R. Johnson. 1996. p. 376.



**Figure 4:** View from the main camp looking towards the pa during the bombardment. [John Williams, Ruapekapeka. N.Z. January 1846. Watercolour. Alexander Turnbull Library A-070-030].

Once the attackers were inside the pa, a good number of soldiers and sailors were unable to resist the urge to rush into the forest.<sup>34</sup> This is where the British suffered most of their casualties: 12 killed and 29 wounded. An account is presented in Manning (1862):

*Most of the soldiers remained in the pa firing through loop-holes ... A few sailors and soldiers, however, went out a little gate at the back of the pa, but were no sooner out than they were shot by the people behind the trees. At least some forty or fifty soldiers got out, and a fight began outside.*<sup>35</sup>

After a number of soldiers were killed in the bush, the British pulled back into the relative safety of the pa. The defenders withdrew to the south, split into smaller groups and headed to different destinations.<sup>36</sup> Despard lost no time in announcing a great victory in his dispatches.

Historians have since expended a lot of energy analysing the causes, debating the course of events, and dissecting the British claim of victory. Ralph Johnson offers a concise summary:

*The governor amassed a large military force of over one thousand soldiers and sailors and attacked Kawiti on a scale not previously seen. Ruapekapeka pa was bombarded with a heavy rain of artillery, which inflicted significant casualties among the defenders and eventually drove Kawiti and his followers from their pa. Although historians have debated how the pa was gained, and the veracity of the British claims of victory, the fact remained that Kawiti had been forced from his pa*

<sup>34</sup> Diary of Major Cyp. Bridge.

<sup>35</sup> Manings, F. E. 1862. p. 43.

<sup>36</sup> R. Johnson. 1996. p. 374.



*and suffered losses. Ruapekapeka was the scene of a heavy British military assault against chiefs who had asked for peace and sought only to maintain chiefly authority and their lands both guaranteed to them under the Treaty of Waitangi.*<sup>37</sup>

## Fabric

The Ruapekapeka Historic Reserve encompasses the pa itself, the main British battery, and part of the British camp. The British troops did an incomplete job of destroying the pa in 1846. Some of the palisades were still standing in 1899, and cannon balls were lying about the place.<sup>38</sup> In 1939 James Cowan was able to enter one of the subterranean shelters, and in 1951 the puriri slabs over the dugouts were intact.<sup>39</sup> It is no longer possible to enter any of the bomb-proof shelters or connecting tunnels, although some of the tunnel entrances are visible (see figure 7).



**Figure 5:** Oblique aerial view of the pa site. The rear of the pa is at the left; the outer defences were breached at the lower right corner.

The earthworks of the outer defences are largely intact aside from the northern corner (see archaeological plan in appendix B). The firing trench around the perimeter is particularly impressive. Visiting the site, it is easy to understand the defensive principles; you can see how the design allowed a flanking fire to be directed at the enemy, and how the rifle trenches prevented a similar tactic being used against the defenders. Plans of Ruapekapeka drawn shortly after the battle show that the pa had two wells. One of these, just on the outside of the defences, remains open today with a fence around it for safety reasons.

<sup>37</sup> R. Johnson. 1996. p. 387.

<sup>38</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, March 3 1899

<sup>39</sup> See source quoted in J. Gardiner, 1983.

There is an 18-pounder carronade<sup>40</sup> mounted near the centre of the pa. This is apparently one of the two pieces of artillery Kawiti had in his possession during the battle.<sup>41</sup> Until a recent re-assembly project, the carronade was broken apart, possibly after being hit by a cannon ball during the bombardment.<sup>42</sup>



**Figure 6:** A view of the outer defences, showing the rifle trench partially divided with earthen banks, and an embankment on the interior side.

The remains of the main British firing position are shown in appendices A and B. The earthworks show that the stockade was pentagonal in shape with two platforms on the edge facing the pa. The 32-pounders were mounted on these platforms.

The British camp is located on a flat area about 300 metres north-west of the main firing position. There is not much to see from the surface, except for a possible ditch. However, there are archaeological features below the surface, confirmed by the results of a geophysical survey carried out in 2005. The features were interpreted as drains around a group of tents, a row of palisades, and part of the original road connecting to the advanced firing position.<sup>43</sup> The survey revealed that the site of the main camp extends beyond the boundaries of the historic reserve.

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<sup>40</sup> A carronade is a short-barrelled cast iron navy cannon

<sup>41</sup> T. Kawiti. 1956. p. 42.

<sup>42</sup> T. Kawiti. 1956. p. 42 states that the carronade was “rendered useless” due to a direct hit. An article in the Auckland Weekly News in 1899 states that “some settlers’ sons went the other day and put a charge of dynamite to it, bursting it into two halves.”

<sup>43</sup> Geometria. 2006. Ruapekapeka Pa Historic Reserve: Report of Geophysical and Topographical Surveys. Report prepared for the Department of Conservation.





**Figure 7:** An entrance to a tunnel within the pa.

## Cultural Connections

Multiple iwi and hapu have strong connections to Ruapekapeka, as tangata whenua of the area, participants in the battle of 1845/6, or both. These include Ngati Manu, Ngati Kahukuri (Ngati Hau), Ngati Hine, Te Kapotai and Ngapuhi Nui Tonu.<sup>44</sup>

## Significance

Ruapekapeka is one of the most significant historic sites in New Zealand, recognised by its status as one of the Departments' ICON sites. Ruapekapeka certainly meets the criteria to be registered as Category I Historic Place under the Historic Places Act. That it has not been registered is because of a perceived lack of urgency/need owing to its Historic Reserve status.

### *History Significance*

*The Northern War is a singularly important event. Although sometimes viewed as a limited series of battles, it represents the earliest and clearest example of the forcible imposition of British colonial power (kawanatanga) over Ngapuhi chiefly authority (tino rangatiratanga).<sup>45</sup>*

The history of Ruapekapeka is entwined with that of the Treaty of Waitangi, a living document which continues to shape New Zealand society. The very existence of the Ruapekapeka site counteracts a powerful myth; the idea of racial harmony, that Maori

<sup>44</sup> These are the iwi/hapu represented on the Ruapekapeka Pa Management Trust, according to the Deed of Trust.

<sup>45</sup> R. Johnson. 1996: 12



and Pakeha were miraculously joined as one after the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi.<sup>46</sup> The fighting in the north was a reaction against that founding document. The fight continues, although the arena has shifted from battlefield to courtroom. In the words of R. J. Walker, the War of the North was “a portent of the Maori dynamic of self-determination that was to find expression in various movements of the next 140 years.”<sup>47</sup>

### *Culture Significance*

To iwi, the Battle of Ruapekapeka is not consigned to a distant past. It is a recent event, the stories told and remembered by successive generations. The underlying causes of the battle – issues of mana, land, power, and *Te Tiriti* – have yet to be addressed. Kawiti and Heke may not have lost the series of battles which we call the War of the North.<sup>48</sup> However, Ngapuhi certainly *did* lose the bigger struggle to exercise their own chiefly authority in accordance with *Te Tiriti*.<sup>49</sup>



**Figure 8:** The *pouwhenua* erected on the pa by descendents of Te Ruki Kawiti.

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<sup>46</sup> J. Belich. 1986.

<sup>47</sup> R. J. Walker. 1984. The Genesis of Maori Activism. *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 93:267-282.

<sup>48</sup> See J. Belich. 1998.

<sup>49</sup> Johnson. R. 1996. 413.

Ruapekapeka is the best preserved of all the New Zealand Wars' sites, and is the only battlefield of the Northern War where surface features remain. The story of Ruapekapeka is unique, but at the same time it is a wonderful example of a "gun-fighter" pa, show-casing the Maori response to muskets and heavy artillery. In 2008 the Institution of Professional Engineers of New Zealand (IPENZ) acknowledged the ingenious design of the pa, by way of a bronze plaque installed at the site. The intact fabric – including the pa itself, the advanced British position, and the subsurface remains at the main British camp must be ascribed a high degree of significance.

## **Management Chronology**

A summary of the management history of Ruapekapeka pa and battle field can be found in a report prepared by David Armstrong and others.<sup>50</sup>

Early interest in the site of the battle was focussed upon the graves of the fallen soldiers and sailors. The issue was raised in parliament in 1884 by Mr Hakuene, M.P. for Northern Maori, who suggested fencing the burial ground to prevent its desecration.<sup>51</sup> Unfortunately, the graves were never fenced and their location has since been forgotten.

In 1889, the pa was in a "fair" state of preservation, although some of the earthworks had been damaged by cattle. During the decades that followed, local settlers filled in some of the earthworks, which were a hazard to wandering cattle. Fires and ploughing caused further damage, and it was apparent that the pa was heading towards obliteration. The Bay of Islands County Council and certain Members of Parliament began to advocate for its acquisition and preservation<sup>52</sup>.

In 1914, just over 5 acres (the pa itself) became a scenic and historic reserve under the Scenery Preservation Act.<sup>53</sup> The Maori owners stipulated that the pa site must be fenced, cleared of scrub, and kept in good order, and £13 compensation was paid to them.<sup>54</sup> According to Armstrong *et al*, that Maori agreed to the alienation of the pa is evidence of their deep concern for its preservation and maintenance, a time-consuming and costly exercise.

In the 1920s Ruapekapeka was cleared of vegetation, sewn in pasture, and fenced. A great number of visitors were attracted to the site; however the well-maintained state did not last, in part due to lack of on-going funding. In the absence of grazing, weeds and ferns grew to obscure the earthworks.<sup>55</sup> The vegetation was cleared again in the late 1930s, but again it was not maintained.<sup>56</sup> The New Zealand Historic Places Trust – who managed the site from the late 1960s – undertook planning and research, but achievements on the ground were modest.<sup>57</sup> Archaeologist J. Coster summarised the

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<sup>50</sup> D. Armstrong, W. O'Malley & B. Stirling. 2008. Northland Land, Culture and Education. Part Two: Wahi Tapu, Taonga and Te Reo Maori. A Report Commissioned for the Crown Forestry Rental Trust, p. 272-287.

<sup>51</sup> See J. Gardiner. 1983.

<sup>52</sup> D. Armstrong *et al*. 2008, p. 273.

<sup>53</sup> D. Armstrong *et al*. 2008, p. 273.

<sup>54</sup> D. Armsrtong *et al*. 2008, p. 277.

<sup>55</sup> D. Armstrong *et al*. 2008, p. 283.

<sup>56</sup> D. Armstrong *et al*. 2008, p. 284.

<sup>57</sup> D. Armstrong *et al*. 2008, p. 285.

situation: “The management history of Ruapekapeka up to the mid 1960s was one of not particularly benign neglect.”<sup>58</sup>

In more recent years, the management of Ruapekapeka has been in the hands of the Department of Lands and Survey, succeeded by the Department of Conservation. The Ruapekapeka Pa Management Trust (RPMT) was formed in 1994, to represent the iwi/hapu who defended Ruapekapeka in 1845/6.

The development of Ruapekapeka as a visitor site began in earnest in 2003. A Development Plan was commissioned, and walking tracks, a new car park, and interpretation signs were developed. A waharoa (carved gateway) was installed near the entrance to the pa. Many native seedlings have been planted since the redevelopment, and the planting programme continues to date. A regular mowing and vegetation maintenance programme in place.

<b>1914</b>	Ruapekapeka Gazetted as a reserve. <sup>59</sup>
<b>1922</b>	£200 granted for fencing, clearing, and emptying of rifle pits. <sup>60</sup>
<b>1930s – 1960s</b>	Site neglected and overgrown with fern and blackberry. <sup>61</sup>
<b>1967</b>	Proposal to develop the pa for tourists; artefacts and palisades removed for safekeeping, pa fenced off and stock removed, additional land for parking and recreational purposes acquired, however progress stalled.
<b>1971</b>	Collection of artefacts associated with the battle, held by Mr B. Timperly, gifted to the Crown. These items include parts of puriri palisades, a collection of cannon balls and rocket fragments, and part of the barrel of a cannon. <sup>62</sup>
<b>1973</b>	Pa site and advanced British position gazetted as a Historic Reserve. <sup>63</sup>
<b>1979</b>	The two reserves united by the purchase of the piece of land in between.
<b>1980</b>	Bay of Island Maritime and Historic Park assumes control.
<b>1983</b>	Extensive research carried out to prepare management plan proposal.
<b>1980s</b>	Trial plantings of <i>Metrosideros</i> (creeping rata) begin, to prevent further erosion of archaeological features
<b>1987</b>	Department of Conservation created; assumes control of Ruapekapeka Historic Reserve.
<b>1994</b>	Ruapekapeka Pa Management Trust established after a series of hui. Trustees elected to manage Ruapekapeka in conjunction with the Department of Conservation.
<b>1998</b>	Land containing part of the Main British Camp purchased and added to the Historic Reserve.
<b>2003</b>	Tracks and new car park completed, interpretation signs and waharoa installed.

<sup>58</sup> J. Coster. 1985. Ruapekapeka Management Requirements. Internal Department of Conservation File NP253.

<sup>59</sup> J. Gardiner. 1983, p. 10

<sup>60</sup> E. C. Clarke. Letter to the Commissioner of Crown Lands. 9 August 1938. Internal Department of Conservation File NP 253.

<sup>61</sup> J. Gardiner. 1983, p. 11.

<sup>62</sup> Internal Department of Conservation File N.P. 253. These items are currently held at the Whangarei Museum.

<sup>63</sup> New Zealand Gazette 1973 p. 894.



**2003-present** Ruapekapeka maintained as a visitor site by the Department of Conservation, and managed in conjunction with the Ruapekapeka Pa Management Trust.

## Management Recommendations

### *Vegetation control*

Ensure mowing/scrub-barring of archaeological features is continued, and carried out to the highest standard. At present the Main British Camp is grazed, subject to certain conditions designed to protect the sub-surface archaeological features. At present, grazing is the best option for this undeveloped part of the reserve.

### *Pest control*

There is evidence of significant damage caused by rabbits on the pa and at the advanced British position. Options for rabbit control should be pursued. Plant pests on the pa include bracken fern, blackberry, and gorse. Spot spraying of these species should be carried out as required.

### *Erosion*

Erosion of the archaeological features is an on-going problem. Planting creeping rata has been successful to a certain degree, and more seedlings should be planted as needed.

### *Maintaining visitor facilities*

Ensure tracks continue to be maintained. Repair or replace damaged interpretation signs as required.

### *Amenity planting*

Continue to plant seedlings to areas identified in appendix C. New plantings should not encroach upon existing lawn area. It is preferable to focus upon filling in the gaps in areas already planted, particularly in zones three, five, six and seven (see appendix D). NB: flax should not be planted within two metres of any track or lawn area, as it creates a maintenance problem when the plant matures.

### *Future development*

The future direction of the site depends upon several factors. Management decisions are made by the Department together with the RPMT. In the short-to-mid term, attention will focus upon using technology to deliver new and exciting interpretation.

The RPMT is in the process of preparing a plan which outlines their strategic direction for the Ruapekapeka Pa and battlefield site.

## Conclusions

The Department assesses historic heritage value against three broad criteria: history significance, fabric significance, and cultural significance. By all three criteria, the historic heritage values of Ruapekapeka are extremely high. In its wider historical context, it is connected to events which shaped a nation. It is the only Northern Wars' battle site with features visible on the surface, and it is better preserved than any pa of the "Land Wars" of the 1860s.

The story of Ruapekapeka is embedded in the psyche of Northland Maori. The site, however, is part of a history shared by all New Zealanders. It is no longer a battle field; it is a place to visit and reflect, to admire the design of the earthworks, and to appreciate the journey we've travelled since 1846. The pou whenua in the middle of the pa is a subtle reminder that we have yet to reach our destination.

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### ***Department of Conservation Files***

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### **Evaluation of Sources**

There is a wealth of source material available for the Battle of Ruaapekapeka. Primary sources include correspondence and despatches of Colonel Despard and Governor George Grey, and the diaries of Cyprian Bridge, Alexander Whisker, and Henry McKillop. A collection of paintings, sketches, maps and plans of the pa and battlefield were produced during and immediately after the battle.

The body of primary source material reflects the battle from the point of view of the British. The problem is that there is no publically available source material from a Maori point of view. The perspective from inside the pa is remembered as oral histories, passed down through the generations. Some of these oral histories have been recorded, but are not available to researchers without express permission from individual *kaikorero*<sup>64</sup>. The lack of published/available information increases the importance of a two secondary sources which draw upon Maori accounts of the battle (Kawiti 1956 and Johnson 2006). The Johnson report, prepared for the Waitangi Tribunal process, is 400 pages long and provides a thorough and balanced overview of the War of the North.

Other important secondary sources include Manning (1862), Cowan (1922) and Belich (1986). A list of source material for the Battle of Ruaapekapeka is held at the Whangarei Area Office; further references may be found in the bibliography of the Johnson report.

Numerous files held at the Whangarei Area Office generally relate to the management of Ruaapekapeka Historic Reserve.

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<sup>64</sup> speaker, narrator

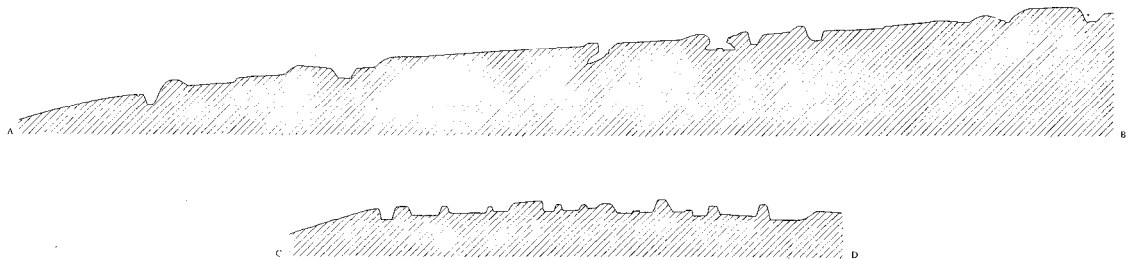
## Appendix A

### Oblique Aerial Photograph of Ruapekapeka Historic Reserve



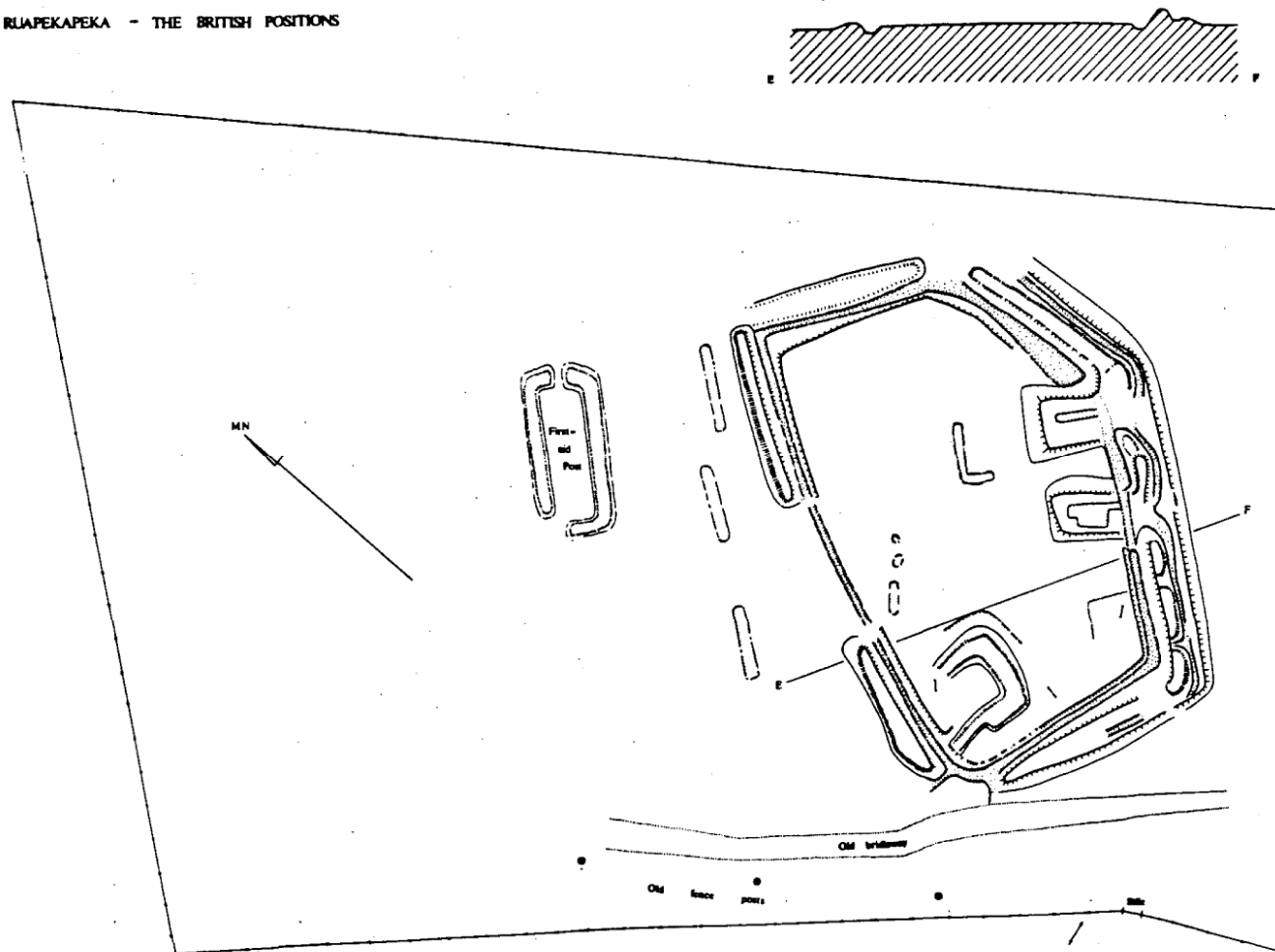
Main British battery is in the foreground (mown area); pa in background, corners indicated by arrows. The cannons were aimed at the bottom left corner of the pa, and this is where the breach occurred.

## Appendix B: Archaeological Plan of Ruapekapeka Pa and the British Position (drawn by J. Leatherby and P. Morgan)



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Lands and Survey, Auckland, by J. Leatherby and P. Morgan,  
to whom acknowledgment should be made.

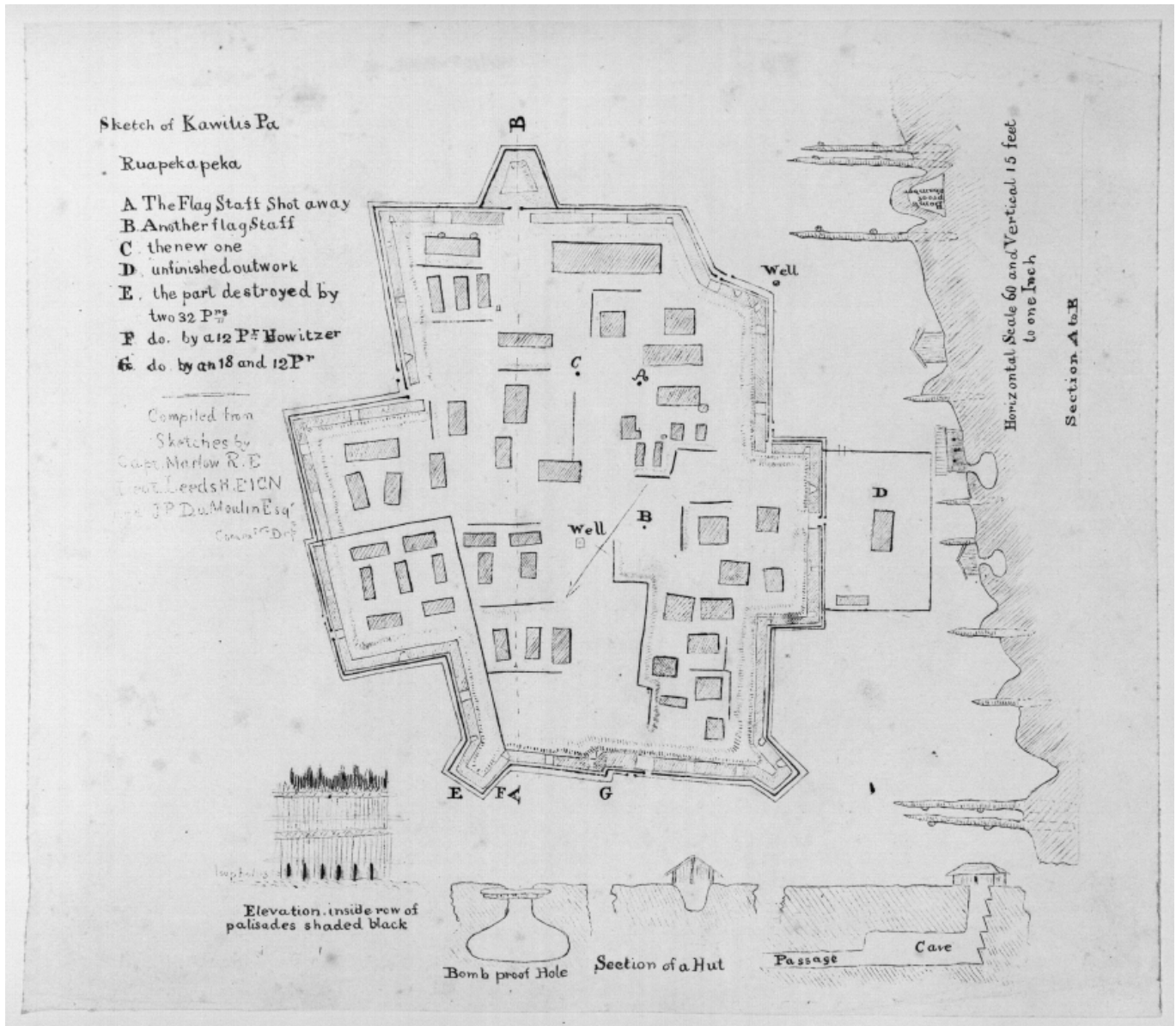
# RUAPEKAPEKA - THE BRITISH POSITIONS





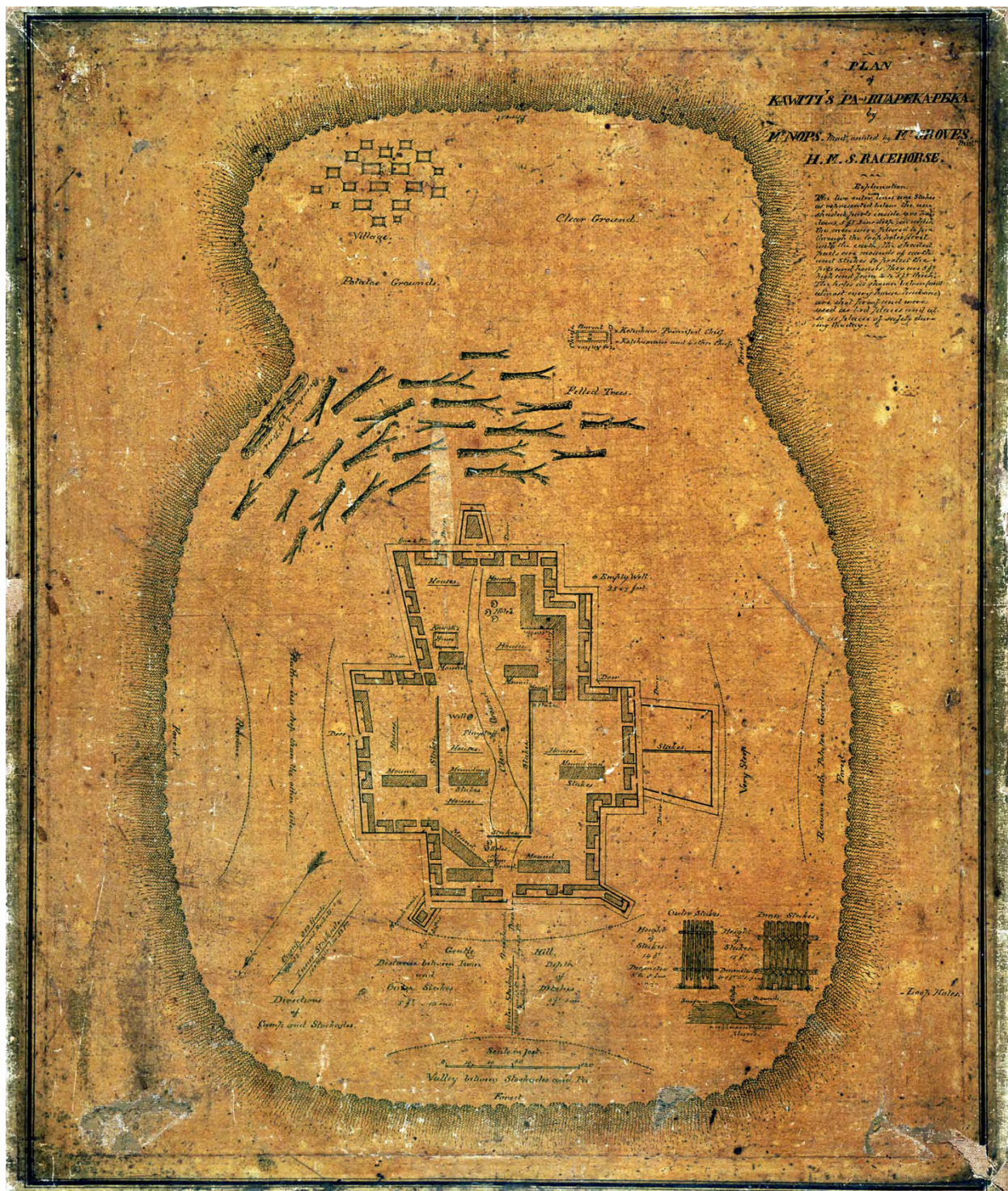
## Appendix C: Contemporary maps and plans

Compiled from sketches by Capt. Marlow and others





Plan of Kawiti's Pa at Ruapekpeka by Mr Nops, assisted by Mr Groves, H.M.S.  
Racehorse



**Appendix D:** Diagram showing planted areas (established forest shown in green; recent plantings in pink)

