

THE NORTHERN WAR - NEW ZEALAND 1845-46

(AKA the First Maori War or the First Land War) By Graham Burke 

The Northern War was fought between the Maori forces of chiefs Heke and Kawiti and the British, allied with other Maoris, notably Tamati Waka Nene, in the then relatively inaccessible 'Bay of Islands' area of the North Island of New Zealand. It has been symbolised by the act which began the hostilities, namely Heke cutting down the Union Jack flag on Maiki Hill above the settlement of Kororareka. This was done to display his anger at the British attempts to exert their sovereignty, without causing damage to economic relations. (He wanted British goods and was happy to have their trading settlements on the periphery of his land, but he didn't want anything else!) The fighting would also show the Maoris to be some of the world's leading field engineers, with their ingenious pa fortifications. The British Army had a good success rate when fighting in the open field and had generally been victorious across the world. It did, however, seem to struggle when assaulting fortifications (New Orleans, Fort Erie, Sevastopol to name a few). It was to face further harsh tests in the 'bush' of New Zealand.

New Zealand had been claimed by Britain after the voyages of Captain Cook and she had the naval supremacy to control access to the islands. In 1840 the British had signed the Treaty of Waitangi with most of the tribes of the North Island. The treaty is controversial even now, but in essence the trouble lay in the fact that white settlers thought that they should have real sovereignty over the whole country, whereas the Maori thought they had agreed to something substantially less. The reality in the

1840s was that the white settlers were only on the periphery of the country and real power still lay with the Maori tribes. The Maori wanted trade with the whites, who could supply with them with all manner of things, most importantly guns, so did not want to expel the settlers, but they resented white authorities encroaching on their spheres of influence. It was the perceived interference of the white settlers which led to the opening incident of the war, the surprise attack on the settlement of

Kororareka (modern day Russell) at 4a.m on 11 March 1845.

KORORAREKA

The settlement was the fifth largest on the island at the time. Trouble had been simmering with Heke since the beginning of the year (he had already cut down the flag three times before to show his disaffection with the governor) so it had been garrisoned by a detachment of the 96th Foot and the Royal Navy sloop

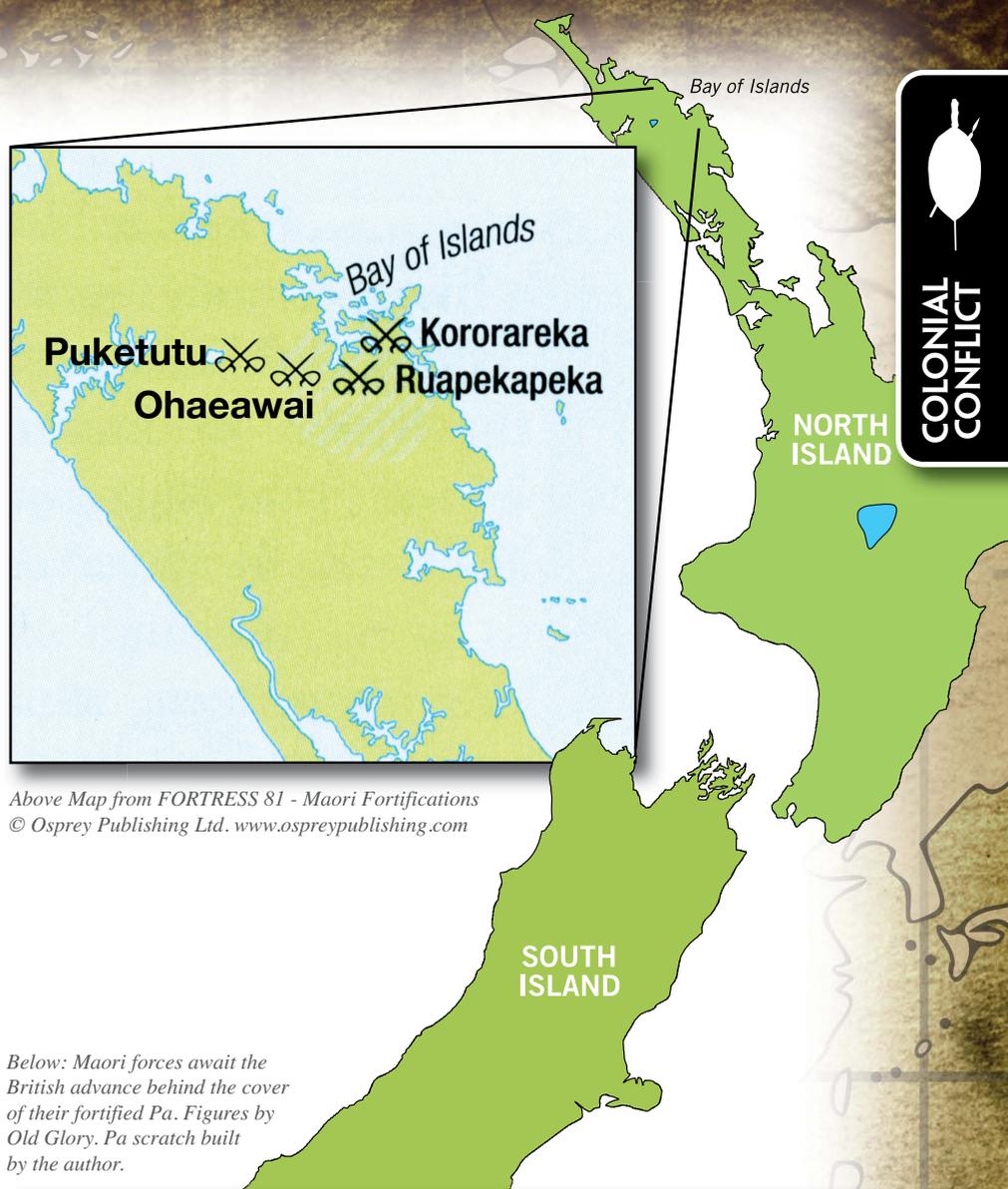
Below: British infantry advancing on a Maori held position. Figures by Old Glory.



HMS *Hazard*. There were 140 soldiers, sailors and marines to defend the town. The settlement was guarded in the north by two blockhouses and a stockade and by a small battery in the south. A force of around 450 Maori warriors attacked in a combined three pronged assault at 4a.m. on 11 March 1845. One group took the southern battery after a fierce struggle with the 45 sailors and marines who guarded it. A second group of around 150 stormed the blockhouse on Maiki Hill, which had only four soldiers in it at the time. The third group kept the British pinned down in the lower blockhouse. The fighting continued until around 1pm when the powder magazine in the stockade exploded. The Maoris did not press home their attacks further, but the British decided to withdraw. The loss of the hilltop blockhouse compromised the defences in the north of the town and the southern battery had been lost. The troops embarked on ship and after a bombardment by HMS *Hazard* the town was left to the Maoris, who plundered it. Losses were 13 killed and 28 wounded for the Maori and 19 killed and 23 wounded for the British. The loss of a settlement caused consternation amongst the colonists and the governor called urgently for reinforcements.

PUKETUTU EXPEDITION

Four weeks later a detachment of 215 men of the 58th Foot arrived from Australia on 22 April 1845, and governor FitzRoy launched an expedition to seek out and destroy Heke and his warriors. The force consisted of 300 regular troops, 40 volunteers and 120 seamen and marines. The only artillery was in the form of a couple of rocket tubes. The expedition sailed north, captured a 'neutral' chief and destroyed his coastal pa and then made their way against Heke, who was constructing a pa at Puketutu. The terrain was difficult and the torrential rain ruined supplies and ammunition. It took the force four days to cover the 15 miles to their objective. The pro British Maori had been busy skirmishing with Heke, so he had been unable to complete his pa. Three sides were complete and consisted of a series of fire trenches protected by high palisades which had firing loop holes close to the ground. The fourth side was just a light fence screen. Heke had around 200 men with him at the pa. Kawiti waited in the bush outside with around 140 men. The British had been informed by their allies of the weakness of the pa and sent an assault party of 216 men against it. As they approached the fortress they were attacked from the bush by Kawiti's forces. The British turned around and



Above Map from *FORTRESS 81 - Maori Fortifications*
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Below: Maori forces await the British advance behind the cover of their fortified Pa. Figures by Old Glory. Pa scratch built by the author.





Above: The British and Maoris clash in front of Puketutu Pa.

forced Kawiti's men back. They were then attacked by a sally from the pa. This was also forced back. Kawiti then attacked again and was again forced back. By this time the British assault force had suffered 52 killed and wounded and was too exhausted to storm the pa, so they pulled back. The Maori had lost 28 killed (unknown wounded) and had been pushed back a number of times. Both sides claimed victory. Heke had not been destroyed and the British had failed to capture the pa. On the other hand the proud Maori warriors had met their match in the fierce hand-to-hand fighting

and they would never again plan to fight British regulars in the open.

OHAEWAI EXPEDITION

Heke abandoned Puketutu as soon as the British had sailed away for Auckland. Whilst the British were organising their next expedition against Heke and Kawiti, the pro British tribes met with Heke and defeated him at the battle of Te Ahuahu on 12 June 1845. There were at least 400 warriors on each side, though no British involvement, making it a major action in the context of the war overall. Heke was

wounded, and this was the only clear cut defeat he was to suffer in the war.

Meanwhile the British had gathered a force of 615 men and four cannon and moved against Kawiti's new pa at Ohaeawai. The going was as tough as on the previous expedition. On 23 June pro British Maoris in the vanguard of the force skirmished with Kawiti's men. The main British force arrived at the pa the next day. The British 12 pounder battery fired against the pa for six days, yet failed to create a breach in the defences. The British commander brought up a 32 pounder from the ships. The Maoris had been harassing their besiegers all the time, but once the heavy gun started to fire on 1 July Kawiti launched a particularly provocative sally against one of the artillery batteries. The provocation worked because the British immediately launched an assault with 250 men. There were about 100 Maoris in the pa at the time. The assault party was repulsed and lost 40 killed and 70 wounded. This was the most significant blow to British forces in the war and came as a very nasty shock.

British commentators blamed the commander, Colonel Despard, for the debacle. In reality the British had come up against a fortification which had new design features, making it far more formidable than other Maori fortifications of the past. The Maoris protected their fire trenches with a substantial palisade, which the British failed to climb over or break through in

FIGURE AVAILABILITY

Old Glory are the only company who make a specifically Northern War range of figures in 28mm. They are those shown as 1840s style. Eureka miniatures do Maori, but their British figures are all for the later wars of the 1860s. Any range of 1st Sikh War British could be used as these conflicts were running concurrently (Old Glory and the old Foundry range). Perry Miniatures do a range of British Auxiliary Legion for their Carlist War range. Those with undecorated shell jackets and forage caps would fit in well. First Corps do a Cape War range and these could be used for a bit of a 'on campaign' variety look. I'm no expert in smaller scales but I think that Minifigs and Irregular Miniatures do ranges.





Above: The British (with Maori scout) crowd around their cannon during the Ohaeawai campaign.

sufficient force to take the position. They had bunkers and therefore had not suffered during the bombardment. The wood that they used was particularly tough and did not splinter. There are fairly trustworthy accounts which suggest that no more than 10 Maori were actually killed in all the days of bombardment and sallying before the actual assault. They used an outer pekarangi fence for a number of tactical reasons: they hung flax mats which concealed the inner defences and also the Maori warriors; it acted as a barrier to break the assaulting troops momentum in a similar fashion to later barbed wire entanglements. None of the British actually saw a Maori during the assault. The high losses were increased by the vigour and aggression of the British troops. They went up to the pa and struggled valiantly for around ten minutes to break in. The assault party did not retire of its own accord and the 'recall' had to be sounded twice! Most other troops would have run far faster with far fewer losses.

Kawiti had got his victory and left the pa (which was of no value in itself) on 11 July. The British knew he was about to leave and started a bombardment on the 10th. They occupied the pa and Despard claimed he had won in the end. This claim really holds no water. The fact that the governor immediately tried to get a settlement shows that the failure of the assault had shattered any hopes of a crushing military victory against Heke and Kawiti.



Above: Soldier from the 96th Foot.



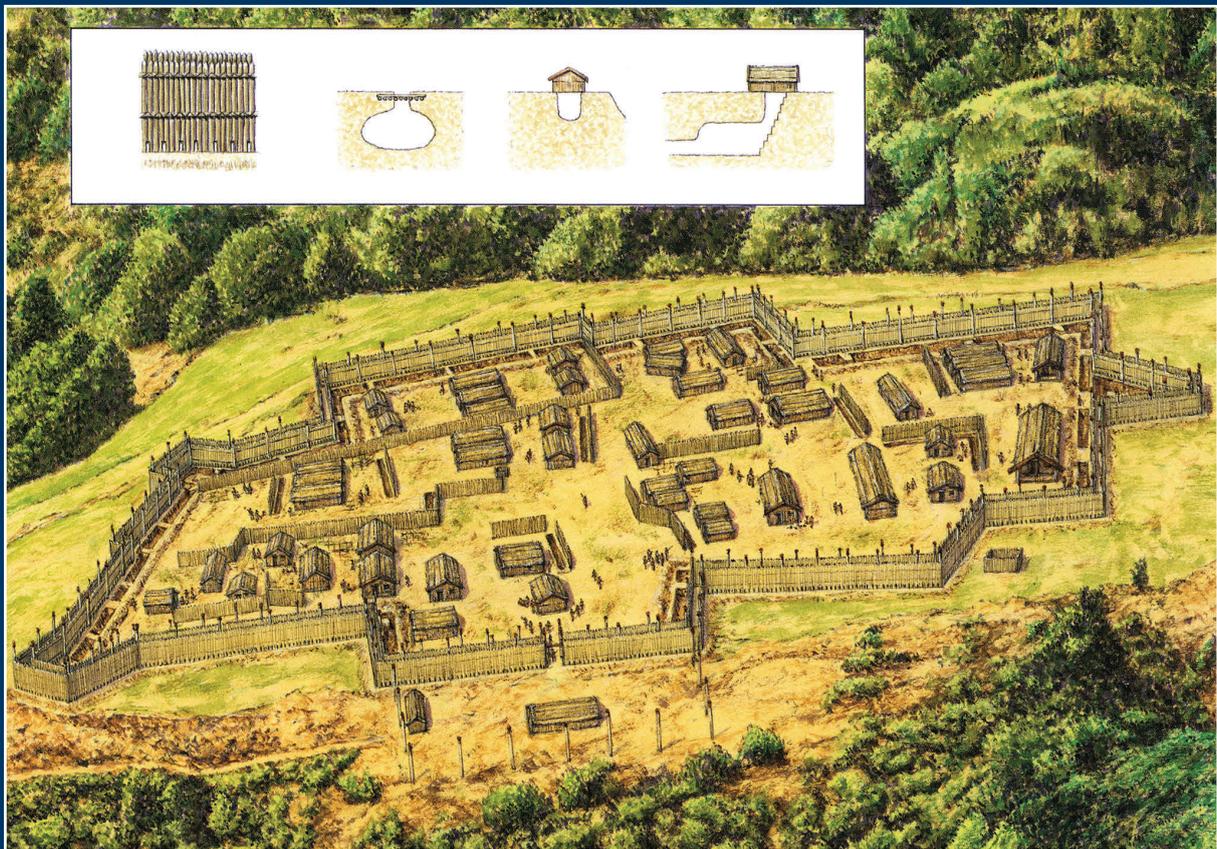
PAINTING GUIDE

British Army

Infantry wore red coats with collars and cuffs in the regimental facing colour (58th Foot: black; 96th Foot: buff; 99th Foot: yellow and Royal Marines: blue) Royal artillery would be in blue. The trousers were dark blue with a red stripe down the side. Straps and haversack tended to be whitish. The water bottle was pale blue with a brown leather strap. The cartridge box and boots were black. The most common head wear was the forage cap and this tended to have a dark blue top and pom pom with a band in the regimental facing colour. Sailors from the ranks did not have a standardised uniform until the 1850s.

Maori

Most warriors at this stage would not have worn much. The most common item shown on the figures is the flax *maro* or skirt which would be of a tan colour. Cartouche boxes would have been home made and of a neutral colour. Maori tend to have a darker complexion than their European opponents and black hair. Tattooing on body and face were generally common. Cloaks and cloth garments are most often shown as either neutral in colour or patterned in a similar manner to tartan.



Above: Illustration by Adam Hook from *FORTRESS 81 - Maori Fortifications* © Osprey Publishing Ltd. www.ospreypublishing.com

Ruapekepeka was a stunning example of an early gunfighters' pa, built by Hone Heke's ally Kawiti in December 1845 and attacked by the British for ten days in January 1846. Unlike most pre-colonial pa it was built in a clearing on a sloping hillside and was an irregular oblong with projecting angles to provide covering fire. It was surrounded by a single stout palisade - smaller than in earlier times - into which loopholes had been cut at ground level; the defenders lined a trench inside the stockade and fired out at ground level through the loopholes. The interior was full of whares - sleeping huts - which were protected by a variety of underground

bunkers and bombproof shelters. One section of the perimeter (foreground) had apparently not been finished when the British arrived and invested the pa. For ten days the British shelled the pa intermittently, although damage was limited; a carronade belonging to the Maori and placed in the centre of the pa was destroyed by a direct hit, and one section of the palisade damaged. On 11 January British troops discovered the pa was apparently abandoned and occupied it through the breach; a firefight then developed in the bush behind the pa, and it is thought that the Maori had abandoned the pa in the hope of luring the British into an ambush in the bush.

RUAPEKAPEKA EXPEDITION

In late September 1845 FitzRoy was replaced as governor by George Grey. He rejected the terms that FitzRoy was proposing and ordered a third British expedition against Kawiti's new pa at Ruapekepeka. The force was 1,300 strong, including 800 regulars and a 400 strong naval brigade. It also had some heavy artillery, including three 32 pounders. Grey also asked the pro British Maori to make attacks on the enemy. Despard commanded the British again and, unsurprisingly proceeded with caution. Strong stockades were built to protect the batteries and pro British Maori were on hand to intercept any sorties by the pa's garrison. The British bombarded the pa day and night for two weeks. This pa was even more advanced and the defenders lost few men to

artillery fire. The heavier cannon did however make breaches in the palisades. The Maori abandoned the pa, leaving only a small rearguard, led by Kawiti himself, inside. The British and their allies rushed into the position. The rearguard fired a volley and attempted to draw the British into the bush behind, where they had set up an ambush. The ruse failed as the Maoris went back towards the pa, fearing that Kawiti had been killed. Both sides took cover and fired at each other for a few hours and then the Maori withdrew. British casualties amounted to 45 and the Maoris about 30. Grey claimed this was a great victory and came to terms with Heke and Kawiti. Traditionally the Northern War has been recorded as a British victory, though this has been questioned by revisionist historians. James Belich claims that Heke and

Kawiti came out on top. They did win some notable victories and remained the main power in their own lands. They did learn that they could not beat the British in the open and they also had a number of pro British tribes curbing their power (having been defeated by them). The British had done enough for peace to be restored without losing face, but the limits of their sovereignty had been shown and the army had not learnt the real lessons of overcoming the pa fortifications, though they had gained the moral victory of proving harder in open combat. The result of this war was so finely balanced that the experts cannot agree who really won, which makes it excellent for wargamers, especially for the colonial era where conflicts tended to be one sided or there were such disparities in numbers that it is hard to recreate on the tabletop.

WARGAMING THE NORTHERN WAR

The small scale of the conflict lends itself to rules such as *Sharp Practice* or the *Legends of the Old West*. 'Legends' has the advantage that you can swap between the standard rules and the rules for 'massed battles' in the *Alamo* supplement (which also has rules for fortifications)

Whichever rules you use I think the following considerations should be at the forefront of any amendments:

The British had no real advantage in firepower. Both side used muskets. The British would tend to have a bayonet and the Maoris would revert to hand weapons.

The British should be superior in hand-to-hand combat, but the margin should not be huge.

The British will have a lot higher breaking factor. They were more ferocious and prepared to take heavy losses.

The Maori should have the greater initiative and be able to take advantage of cover more than the British. On the downside, they should break more easily. This is not to reflect that they were less brave, it is because they could not sustain heavy losses. During the conflict they suffered around 170 casualties compared to around 260 for the British and 40 pro

British Maori. But, as they had a warrior pool of only about 1,000, their losses were proportionally greater.

The pro British Maori were an important factor in the conflict. They should be treated as 'equal' allies rather than subordinates. They often had their own agenda and if possible should be played by someone apart from the British commander.

For *Sharp Practice* I would suggest that the British rankers are generally one grade higher than the Maori warrior, but the Maori 'Big Men' have a higher initiative level. Heke and Kawiti are very much 'Cock o' the Walk' level 4, whereas I would limit the brave but not particularly inspired British Officers to 'Fine Fallahs' level 2. I would rate pro British Maori exactly the same as those who opposed the British. They did after all inflict the only substantive defeat on Heke. I would also give the Maori the spotting bonuses and the movement bonuses of the Injuns in the main rulebook.

For *Legends* I would suggest the following profiles for the rank and file

British Soldier/Sailor

S	F	St	G	A	W	P
4+	4	3	3	1	1	4

Soldier armed with musket and bayonet. Sailor armed with pistol and cutlass.

Marines armed as soldiers. Break test after 50% loss.

Maori Warrior

S	F	St	G	A	W	P
5+	3	3	3	1	1	3

Armed with musket and hand weapon. Break Test after 25% loss

Special rule. If a Maori is within 'bush' or 'forest' enemy models have to roll a 'spotting check' to fire on him.

For British NCOs I would add +1 to Grit and Pluck.

Captain

S	F	St	G	A	W	P	FA	FT
4+	4	3	4	2	2	6	1	2

Armed with a sword and pistol. Special rule: True Grit skill in the main rule book.

Maori war leader

S	F	St	G	A	W	P	FA	FT
4+	4	3	4	2	2	4	3	1

Armed with a musket and a hand weapon. Special rule: Is stealthy in bush or forest so enemy models have to pass a 'spotting check' to fire on him,

You could always make up higher characteristics for Heke and Kawiti.



SCENARIOS

I have tried to take historical events and turn them into workable scenarios for the tabletop. I give the actual number of combatants where possible, so that they can be used for any set of rules or scale that the players wish

KORORAREKA

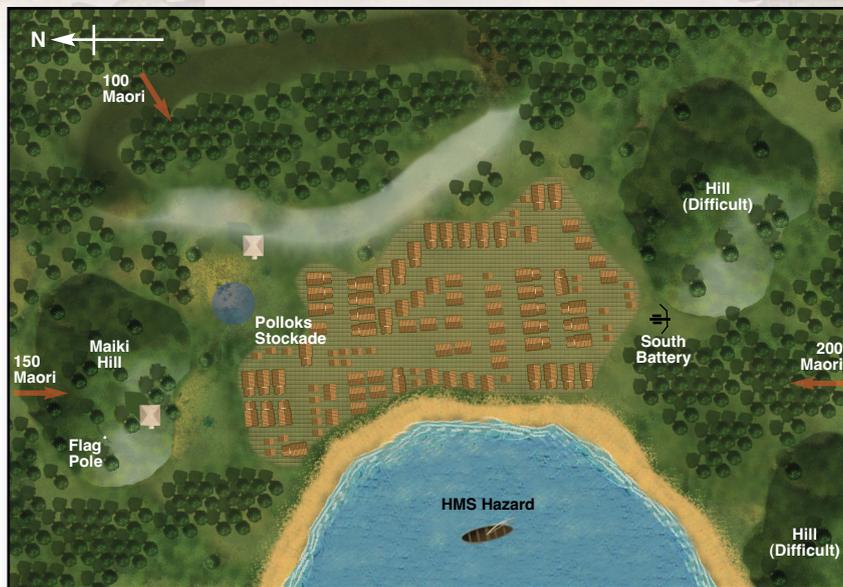
The British defences are as follows:
To the south of the town was a single gun battery with 45 sailors and marines,
To the north of the town was the blockhouse on Maiki Hill (with the Union flag next to it). This had a garrison of 20 men. There was another blockhouse with a similar garrison and Pollock's stockade which would have the remaining 55 troops. The 18 gun HMS *Hazard* is in port and can support with artillery fire on the town.

The Maori were divided into three groups: 150 men under Kawiti assault the battery at the south of the town, 200 men under Heke storm Maiki Hill, and 100 take up firing positions in the 'bush' to cover the second block house and stockade.

The attack was something of a 'dawn raid' and it would be good to reflect this using hidden movement cards and 'spotting tests' by the sentries. During the real battle the sentry at Maiki Hill fired a warning shot, but the position was overwhelmed immediately.

The ship should be able to cover the town with support fire, but not the defensive positions to the north and south.

One of the main incidents was the explosion of the magazine at Pollock's stockade. Once the stockade is being attacked a D10 should be rolled each turn and on a roll of one the magazine should go up (increasing by one each turn so in the second turn it would be on a 1 or 2 etc). Once this happens there should be a



Above: 6' x 4' Map of Kororareka.

limit on ammunition for the defenders left in the northern defences. James Belich (the pre-eminent revisionist historian on the war) cannot reconcile the fact that a major excuse by the British for the defeat was that they ran out of ammunition, as he points out that HMS *Hazard* was able to bombard the town once the British forces had been evacuated. I am suggesting that only the northern defences have the risk of running out of ammunition in the scenario.

The townsfolk could be added to the scenario if you wish. An estimate of 200 armed civilians gives some sort of guide for ratio purposes. They should be inferior to the regulars and the Maori warriors.

PUKETUTU CAMPAIGN

There are a couple of scenario possibilities. Firstly there are the skirmishes between the the two Maori factions. This phase was important as it

meant the pa was not completed by the time the British arrived. There could also be a recon mission by the pro British Maori player to ascertain the weakness of the defences before the British assault.

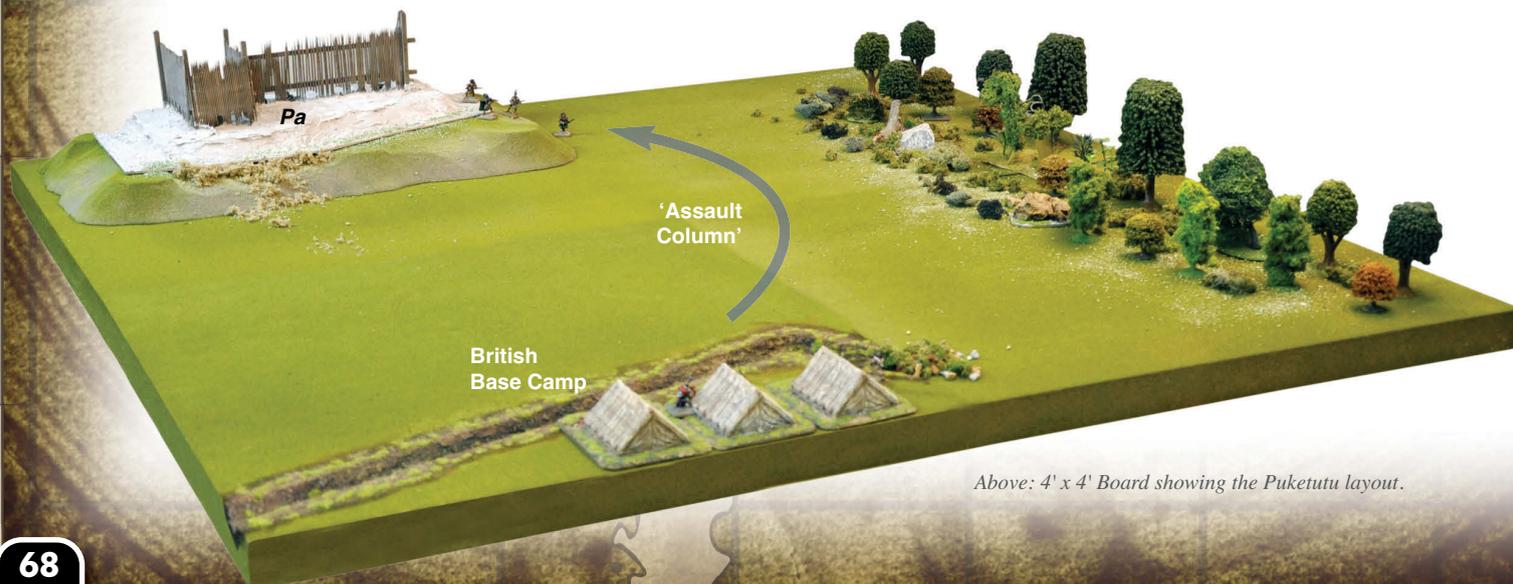
THE BATTLE OF PUKETUTU

British. Assault force of 216 men. There should be a handful of pioneers with axes to break down the fence, should they get that far.

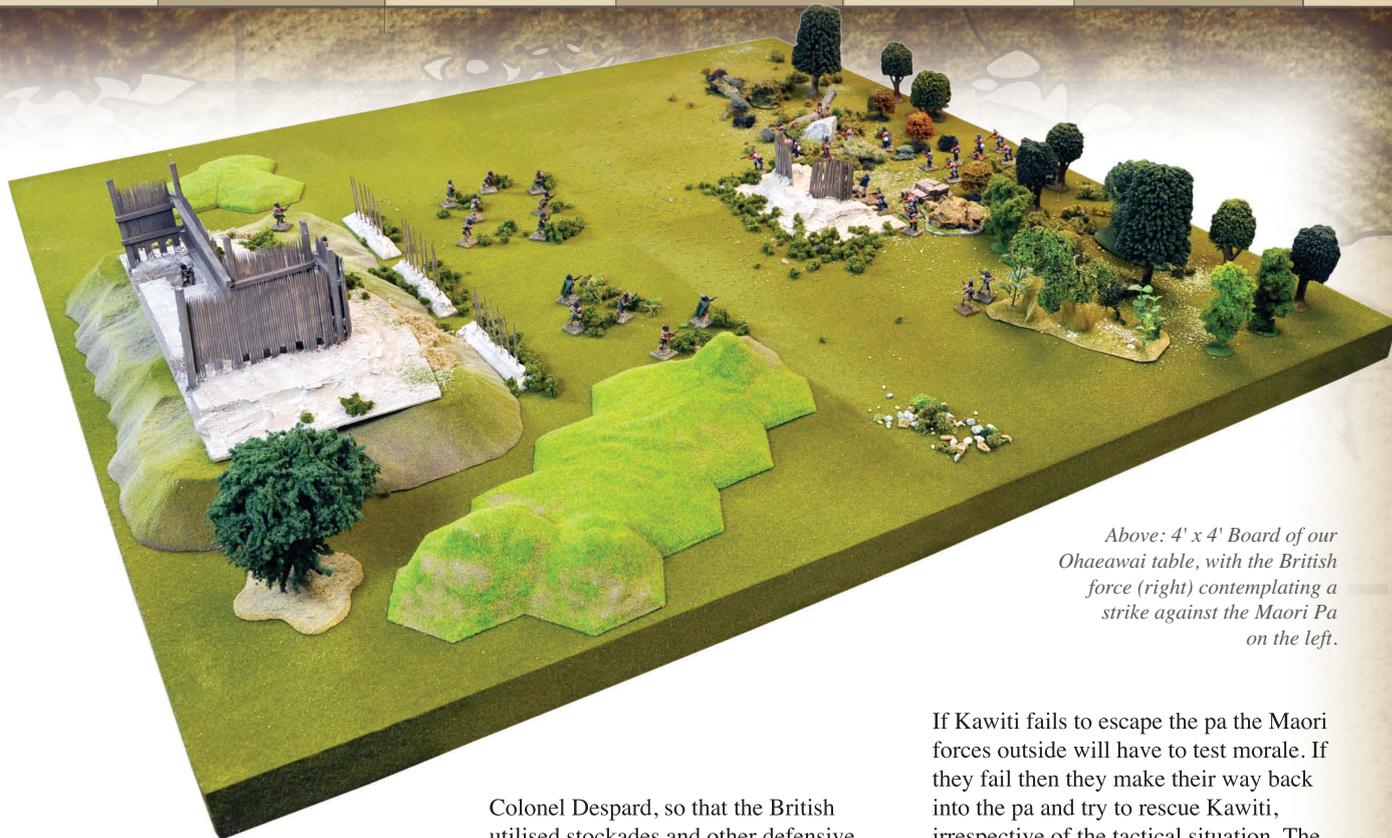
Maori. There were about 200 men in the pa. Allow a force of 60 to 100 to sally forth.

There were 140 in the 'bush' under Kawiti who appeared to the rear of the British as they made ready to assault. They should be 'hidden' at the beginning of the game.

The British base camp is on the edge of the board. The remainder of the force should not be able to move up, but can give supporting fire if Kawiti tries to attack too early.



Above: 4' x 4' Board showing the Puketutu layout.



Above: 4' x 4' Board of our Ohaeawai table, with the British force (right) contemplating a strike against the Maori Pa on the left.

OHAEAWAI CAMPAIGN

Despard's assault on Ohaeawai is not a really balanced scenario and can only really lead to a heavy British defeat. If one wants to play an assault I suggest that you play it under the following circumstances. Despard does not react after Kawiti's sally and waits until the heavy guns have made some practicable breaches in the defences of the pa's main pallisade. A more balanced scenario could be a sally attempt on a British battery with both pro British Maori and British regular forces able to take on Kawiti's raiders. The British had extreme logistical difficulties in these campaigns, so the Maori player should attempt to destroy the ammunition at the battery.

The battle of Te Ahuahu is possibly one of the most important of the war. It should be a straight fight between Heke and the pro British tribes. The forces should be fairly equal. The terrain should be fairly open. During this battle Heke was wounded and a number of his war leaders were killed. I suggest that Heke and a couple of the leaders should be fairly exposed at the beginning of the battle and more at risk.

RUAPEKAPEKA CAMPAIGN

There could be further skirmishes and sallies against the British battery for this campaign. The advance guard would be pro British Maori and they were pretty successful in keeping any sally from the British guns. There was also the added caution of the British commander,

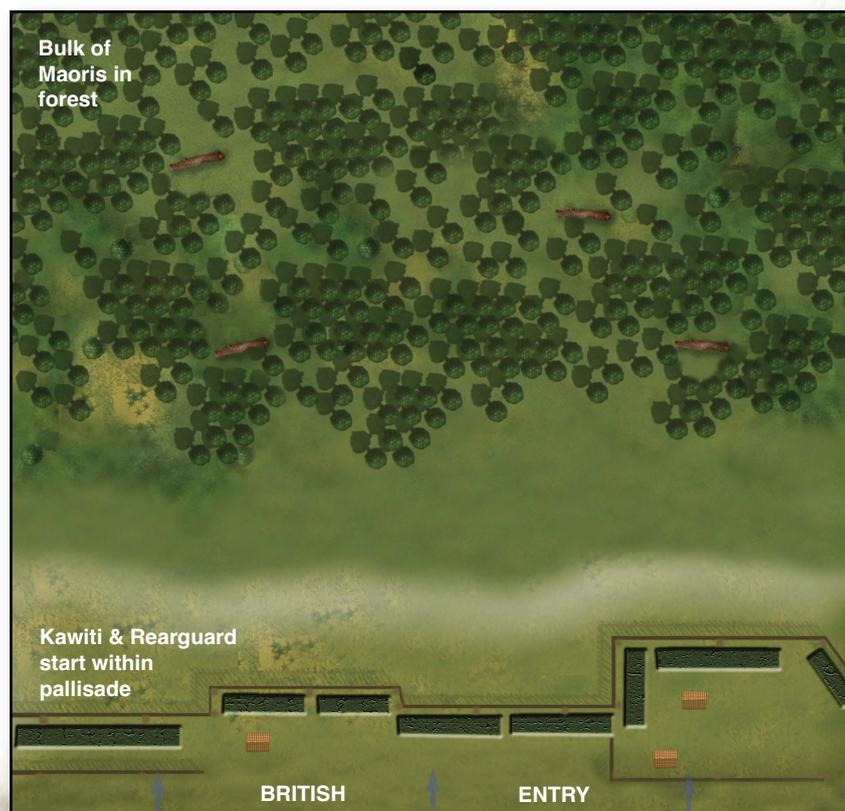
Colonel Despard, so that the British utilised stockades and other defensive fortifications to a greater extent.

ASSAULT ON RUAPEKAPEKA

The main assault could be run as a 'catch Kawiti' scenario. Kawiti and a small rearguard start in the pa. The bulk of the Maori forces are in the forest behind. The Maori player can cut down trees to form defensive fire positions and should have an advantage in any 'bush' shoot out. Kawiti cannot leave any of his surviving forces in the pa after he leaves.

If Kawiti fails to escape the pa the Maori forces outside will have to test morale. If they fail then they make their way back into the pa and try to rescue Kawiti, irrespective of the tactical situation. The British force, which can include pro British Maori, start off at the three breaches in the pa's pallisade. They will try to hunt down the garrison. They will have to pass morale tests so as not to get dragged into an ambush in the woods. The British can consider it a victory if they kill or capture Kawiti, and a crushing victory if they get Kawiti and cause more casualties than they receive. The Maori player will win if he causes twice as many casualties as he suffers. Anything else will be a draw.

Below: 4' x 4' Map showing the assault of Ruapekapeka.



THE TARANAKI WAR - NEW ZEALAND 1860-61

(AKA the Second Maori War)



By Graham Burke



Above: Maoris burst from the undergrowth in an assault on a colonial township. Figures by Old Glory.

Britain had claimed New Zealand and had the naval strength to deny it to any other outside power. The 1840 Treaty of Waitangi had been signed with the native Maori chiefs and this had, in the eyes of the British, surrendered substantive sovereignty to them. The reality of the situation was somewhat different. The Maoris were the majority population up until the 1860s. British authority did not extend beyond the areas that had been 'sold' to white settlers. The Northern war of 1845-6 had been inconclusive and had shown that the British could not control affairs within Maori lands. It had also shown that the Maoris were divided. A number of the tribes had fought with the British and even their 'opponents' did not want push the British into the sea, they just wanted them to remain on the periphery as economic partners and not try to impose their will on the country as a whole.

Apart from a few minor skirmishes in the late 1840s (Wanganui 1847) matters had been peaceful for over a decade. This hid the fact that there was a hardening of attitudes on both sides. The expansion of the British settlements meant that there was a feeling British law and customs should be spread across the whole country. There were Maori factions that wished to limit the amount of land that was sold to the white settlers. Although the situation was complicated, for the purposes of wargaming the campaign these warriors can be given the name the King Movement.

The catalyst for conflict was a disputed land purchase at Waitara. Historians are

still arguing the true cause of the war, but in essence the modern revisionist theory is that the British were looking to crush Maori independence and bring them into line with British laws and customs and the Maori were obviously trying to resist this. The whole campaign was conducted within about 20 miles of the major British settlement of New Plymouth. This was not as rough a country as was fought over in the Northern War but still presented British forces with a number of headaches!

The forces involved were fairly limited. The Atiawa tribe, who resisted the purchase initially numbered 200 to 300 warriors. The British forces in the area

In WI274 we presented an article on *The Great Northern War - New Zealand 1845-46 (AKA The First Maori War)*, whilst this month's article is not designed as a follow up or second part to that piece and can be read independently, you might like to take a look at this preceding article to get a rounded picture of the Maori Wars. If you missed the last article it is now available to download from our website at www.wargamesillustrated.net

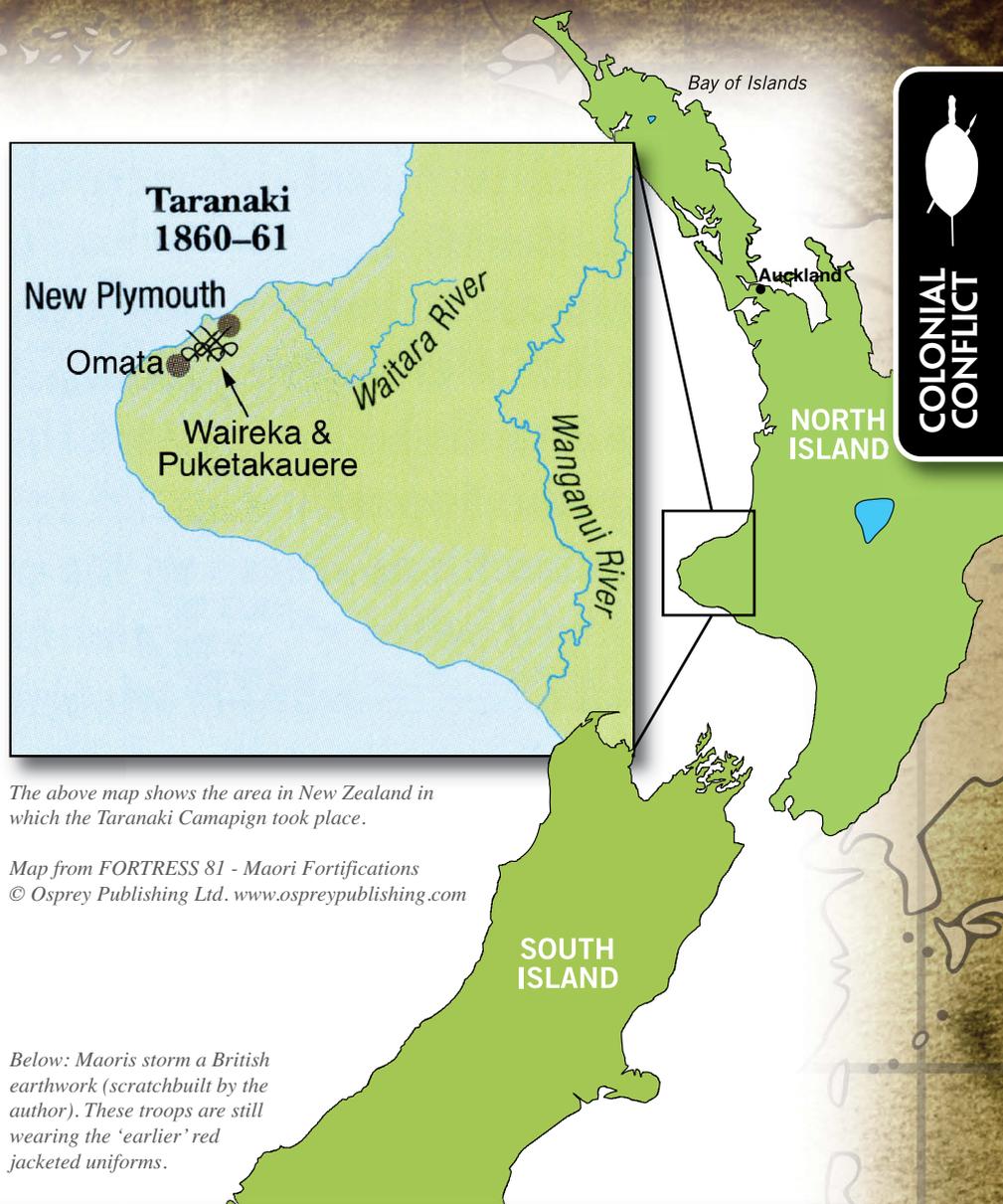
were originally around 800 strong. The Southern Taranaki tribes soon joined in and added around 400 to 500 warriors. Intervention from the King Movement based in Waikato may have given a final total of around 1,200 Maoris. The British raised their forces so that they were around 2,000 strong by June 1860 and had reached 3,500 in 1861.

The first shots were fired on 17 March 1860. British forces had occupied the disputed territory to allow the surveyors in. Around 80 Atiawa warriors built a *pa* at Waitara and fired at troops nearby. The British invested the fortification with around 500 men and poured musketry and artillery fire into it at ranges as short

fire into it at ranges as short as 50 yards. The *pa* had anti-artillery bunkers and well placed fire trenches. The British fire had no effect and the Maoris escaped on the night of 17-18 March. The British failed to get their decisive victory. Within a week the Southern Taranaki tribes had joined the conflict and were raiding outlying settlements. This sort of action would distract large portions of the British forces for the whole length of the war.

THE ACTION AT WAIREKA

On 28 March 1860 the largest action of the first phase of the war took place around Waireka. It is more important for the fallout between regular British forces and settler militia than the effects it had on the enemy. Although recorded by some as a major engagement it was little more than a dispersed skirmish. A column of around 300 regulars was sent to probe a reported Maori position on the road between New Plymouth and Omata. At the same time a force of around 160 militia and volunteers headed along the coast to act as an outflanking force. The fortified position did not exist and after some minor skirmishing the regulars returned to base. The militia, who were in their first action, also came under fire. They went to ground in a farm complex and called for assistance, believing they were heavily outnumbered. A naval party independently stormed what was claimed to be a *pa* and apparently saved the militia after the regulars had left



The above map shows the area in New Zealand in which the Taranaki Campaign took place.

Map from FORTRESS 81 - Maori Fortifications
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Below: Maoris storm a British earthwork (scratchbuilt by the author). These troops are still wearing the 'earlier' red jacketed uniforms.





Above: This earthwork redoubt is of the type built by the British to protect their sapping operations during the war. The Maoris would launch numerous sorties against these defences in an attempt to disrupt the British sappers who were aiming to destroy their pas.

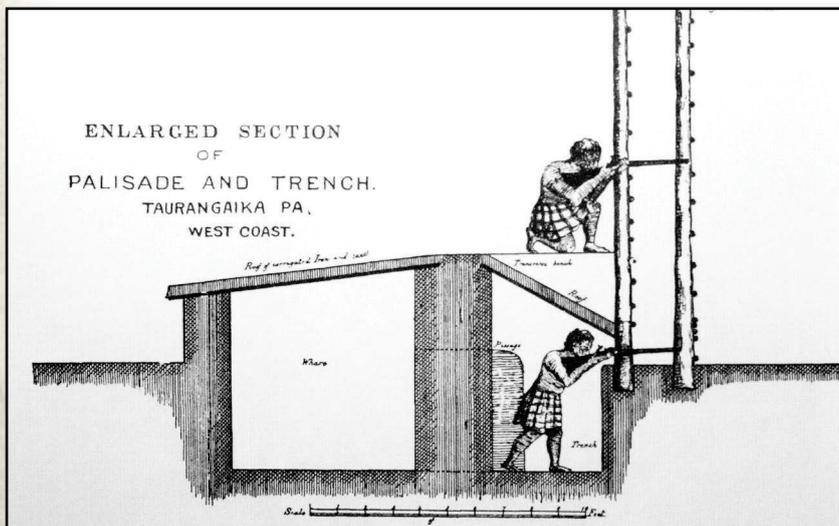
them in the lurch! There were wild claims that over 150 Maori had been killed. In reality the *pa* was just a small camp and only one person was killed. The fighting had been at long range and the Maori were unwilling to press home any attack. The militia lost six or seven wounded and an eye witness claimed there were only two dead Maori accounted for in the Militia's area of operation. The Maori dismissed all the wild claims with laughter. They certainly had not been in a major battle!

THE KING MOVEMENT JOINS THE WAR AND THE BATTLE OF PUKETAKAUERE

After the British had failed to gain a quick victory over the Taranaki tribes there was a lull, and both sides tried to recruit the King Movement to either join in, or stay out of the conflict. The British feared the war widening and had already diverted troops towards Auckland as an insurance against such a possible threat. The Auckland province remained neutral in

the conflict and there were no British operations against the Kingites' home area of Waikato. During the summer of 1860 the Kingites were won over by the Taranaki tribes and joined the conflict. This gave the Maoris the chance to gain a victory against the British in this conflict.

In June the Maori started to build a *pa* within a mile of the British field camp at Waitara. It was a deliberate move to provoke an attack. On 27 June 350 British troops under the command of Major Nelson, with two howitzers in support, attacked the Maori position and suffered a heavy defeat. The Maori position was on two low hills situated between two swampy gullies. On one was a stockade, which the British believed to be the main position. On the other were trench systems that the British did not know about in detail and they considered them to be secondary. One hundred and eighty men under Nelson, supported by the guns, were to assault the stockade. One hundred and twenty five men (grenadiers and part of the light company 40th Foot) were to assault the other low hill and then support the assault of the main column from the rear, and a force of 60 were to take up position behind the Maori camp to cut off a retreat. The guns blasted a breach in the stockade and the main column attacked. The Maori were not in the stockade but in concealed fire trenches outside and the assault column was unable to break into the Maori positions. With his flanks coming under pressure, Nelson withdrew and picked up the 'cut off party' of 60 men. The 40th



The defences of Tauranga-Ika included a double row of palisades behind which the defenders could fire at ground level from the shelter afforded by a deep ditch. Inside the *pa* were a number of sunken whares (huts) covered over with corrugated iron, matting and earth to render them shellproof. In some places platforms extended from these buildings to the palisades to provide a second firing line.



Above: British troops (by Old Glory) in their 1860's blue uniforms.

Foot had an even worse time of it. They assaulted the second hill and found it to be heavily defended. The attack was pressed home but the Maoris, operating on internal lines, were able to reinforce the line and break the attack. The column broke into three groups, two of which managed to disengage but the other was driven into the swampy ground and shot down. The grenadier company of the 40th Foot alone lost 33 casualties. Total Maori losses were five killed.

The Battle of Puketakauere created a crisis for the British. It put them on the defensive, and there were genuine fears that the Maori would take the initiative and strike against New Plymouth. There was also the fear that the defeat would encourage other tribes to side against the British and attack them elsewhere. General Pratt took over command from Colonel Gold and was ordered to gain a decisive victory, but not to risk another disastrous defeat! (Politicians then as now like to have it both ways!)

The summer was difficult for the British. The Maori ran the country outside the screen of redoubts and defences and New Plymouth was suffering from overcrowding and disease. The settlers were dismayed by the actions of the regular forces. On 11 September Pratt led a column of 1,500 men to destroy some abandoned Maori defences at Huirangi. The vanguard was attacked just past the position. The force withdrew and did not pursue the enemy. Although probably the correct decision

PAINTING GUIDE

British Army

The British went through a phase of issuing dark blue campaign jackets and these seem to have been universally worn in New Zealand during the 1860s. Trousers were dark blue with a red stripe down the side. Straps, haversack, and gaiters were whitish. Cartridge box and boots were black. The water bottle was pale blue with a brown leather strap. The caps were also of dark blue with regimental numbers usually in brass. Sailors would have worn their traditional uniform, which was introduced in the 1850s, dark blue for winter and white for hot weather. As New Zealand had only just become self governing and was still little more than a series of fledgeling settlements the militia would have been supplied with the same kit as the regular forces in the area. The only difference would have been buttons and badges.

Maori

Many warriors would have still worn the traditional flax *maro* or skirt, but they were increasingly mixing traditional and European dress. They had made their own cartouche boxes, but many would probably have stolen British issue ones. By the 1860s the full facial tattooing was in decline, but still prominent on many warriors





Above: The Maoris push forward into a township. During the summer of 1860 the Maoris launched a number of harassment raids against British forces and towns.

militarily it had the locals shouting that the regulars ran from the natives! A similar incident took place on 29 September. An further expedition to Kaihihi on 11 October yielded only empty positions. Even the first clear British victory at Mahoetahi on 6 November was something of a disappointment. Pratt led a column of 1,000 men and surprised a Maori working party of around 150 who were starting to fortify the position. The place was stormed, but the disparity in numbers and its lack of effect on the Maori strategy/ morale showed it to be substantially less than a decisive victory.

As the year wore on the war continued in the same vein. The Maori would conduct raids to keep the British on the back foot. They also encircled the British within the New Plymouth pocket with a ring of *pa* fortifications. These *pas* were modern entrenchment systems which mostly lacked the traditional palisade. The British had learnt from Puketakauere that

they could not be taken easily. The British could rarely catch the Maori in the open and so General Pratt came up with the strategy of sapping. The British would use the traditional siege method of approaching an enemy fortification by means of digging a trench towards it. From December 1860 until the end of the conflict it was this strategy which would dominate British actions. The Maori, for their part, continued to raid outlying areas, which robbed Pratt of resources, in the form of soldiers, for the trenches

The British constructed eight redoubts from which to launch their saps. The first *pa* to be taken was the Matarikoriko fort on 29 December 1860. It cost the British much sweat and three killed and 23 wounded. The Maori losses were lighter. As the *pas* were of no value in themselves the Maori just pulled back and constructed a new one. The British then focussed their attention on the reoccupied Huirangi *pa* in January 1861. The major incident of the operation was

an attack on British redoubt number 3 by 140 Maori warriors. The British had got wind of this coming and had reinforced the position so the Maori confronted a garrison of 400. Not surprisingly the Maori were repulsed with heavy losses. This was their one real blunder of the conflict.

The British started their final push of the war towards the Te Aroi defensive line in February 1861. Hostilities were brought to a close on 18 March 1861 on the basis of the status quo. General Pratt's sapping had failed to deliver a knock out blow and the governor had decided it was best to let things stay as they were for the time being.

When looking at who 'won' the Taranaki war it can most accurately be described as a limited Maori victory. The British were looking for a decisive victory to break the independence of the Maori tribes. They held the disputed Waitara district, but had failed to deliver a knock out blow to any of the tribes. The British had tried to keep the fighting localised and therefore the Kingite warriors could come and go as they liked. This stopped the British putting a stranglehold on the Taranaki tribes. The anti-British Kingite movement was strengthened by the Maori success in the war. Although the Maori had been successful in stalling the British they also had reason to rue the encounter. The British suffered 238 casualties (mostly wounded) as opposed to around 200 (and a higher proportion killed) for the Maori. Percentage wise they therefore took heavier casualties and these could not be replaced as was the case with British forces. There has been much written about the performance of General Pratt. While it is true that he failed to win the war with a knock out blow he did win both of the British forces only clear cut victories. Whilst his sapping was far less effective than his champions claim, it did mean he kept up offensive operations without the casualties of previous British assaults on defended Maori positions.

HI BRITISH COUNTER-ENGINEERING WORKS, BASED ON 'PRATT'S SAP' AT TE AREI, JANUARY-MARCH 1861

The British employed saps - trenches supported by earth-filled gabions and screened by flanking traverses - against several *pa* in the 1860s, most notably at Te Aroi. The sap was dug towards the *pa* under cover of fire from men in the traverses - once it reached its target the intention was to undermine the defences of the *pa* or to destroy them with explosives, but in fact most Maori abandoned their positions once the sap reached dangerously close. Although sapping was labour intensive and time consuming, it allowed attackers to reach their objectives

with minimal risk from Maori fire. General Pratt's sap at Te Aroi was the largest British engineering work built during the New Zealand Wars, as it was further protected by earthwork redoubts - usually oblong in shape with a projecting bastion at opposite corners - thrown up as it progressed. The Maori attempted to halt the progress of the work by launching surprise attacks upon these redoubts, as here, but they were usually unable to penetrate the British defences as the British were theirs. Shown inside the defences here is a small Coehorn mortar, which was popular among British and colonial troops in the 1860s as it could be carried by hand through the bush (poles were run through the carriage to make a stretcher) and was effective at lobbing shells over Maori palisades and into the inner trenches.

Right: Illustration by Adam Hook from FORTRESS 81 - Maori Fortifications © Osprey Publishing Ltd. www.ospreypublishing.com

WARGAMING THE TARANAKI WAR

The small scale of the conflict lends itself to rules such as *Sharp Practice* or the *Legends of the Old West*. *LOTOW* has the advantage that you can swap between the standard rules and the rules for 'massed battles' in the *Alamo* supplement. (Which also has rules for fortifications.)

[Wargaming the Maori Wars was covered in general in our preceding article: *The Northern War, New Zealand 1845-46*, from *WI274*. This article is now on the website and is available for reference.]

SCENARIO IDEAS

I have tried to take historical events and turn them into workable scenarios for the tabletop, trying to concentrate on the problems which faced the real protagonists. I give the number of actual combatants where possible to allow them to be used whatever rule set or scale that is being played.

BRITISH PATROL

The board is set up with dispersed farm buildings (each with two occupying settlers) representing the edge of settler territory, with a road running down the centre. The British march up the road from one board edge and have to gather up as many settlers as possible,

before exiting via the opposite edge. The Maori raiders set up in cover up to 6" in on the three other sides of the board, their aim is to try to; set fire to buildings, capture loot and kill unwary settlers.

At the end of the game the Maori player receives one point for each fire (which has burnt for at least three turns), each kill and each piece of loot gathered. Any Maori model may search for loot once during his turn, and is successful on a D6 score of 5 or 6.

There are profiles for settlers/civilians in *LOTOW*. For *Sharp Practice* they should be rated as poor and be unarmed. The settlers will stay indoors unless brought out by the British. They will defend themselves in hand-to-hand combat with

farm implements, but will not initiate attacks against the Maori. They will attempt to either put fires out or run to the next building. A simple mechanism for fires is - They are set on a D6 roll of 4, 5, 6. Next turn roll to see if the fire takes hold - on a 1 the fire goes out. To put out a fire roll a D6 score of 6 is required. If there is more than one person tackling the blaze then the score required is reduced by one.

The British patrol should outnumber the Maori raiders by about 3 to 1 (I used around 24 British, eight Maori and 6 buildings).

Once a player has taken a turn being the Maoris, switch sides, and see who is able to accumulate the most points.

Below: The table for the 'British Patrol' scenario with the Maoris entering from the left and right sides.



MAORI RAIDERS

The board is set up similar to the *British Patrol* map above but with no road and one British defensive work placed 4" in from the northern board edge.

This redoubt is too strong for the Maori to take, but is the entry point for British forces sent to engage the raiders and can give fire support. I tend to give this a garrison of around 24 models, with the rule that at least 10 must stay in the fortress at any time. The rest of the board has dispersed farm houses. Again the Maori will attempt to set fire to or loot as many of the houses as possible. I tend to make the Maori force around 8 to 10 strong. The firing and looting should work in a similar way to that described in the first game. Any Maori force silly enough to try and take the British head on should remember the action at redoubt number 3!

BRITISH CLEARANCE PATROL

This is a more balanced version of the action at Mahoetahi. The Maori are dispersed in an open-ish area in a circle 12" in radius from the centre of the board. They are in the process of marking out new defensive positions (though none have been constructed). The British set up 6" in from one board edge and have the initiative on the first turn. Between the Maori position and the edge opposite to the British entry point the Maori player can set up three 2-man fire trenches or barricades. These represent the ambush points that were so



Above: British troops at Waireka spread out in pursuit of the Maoris.

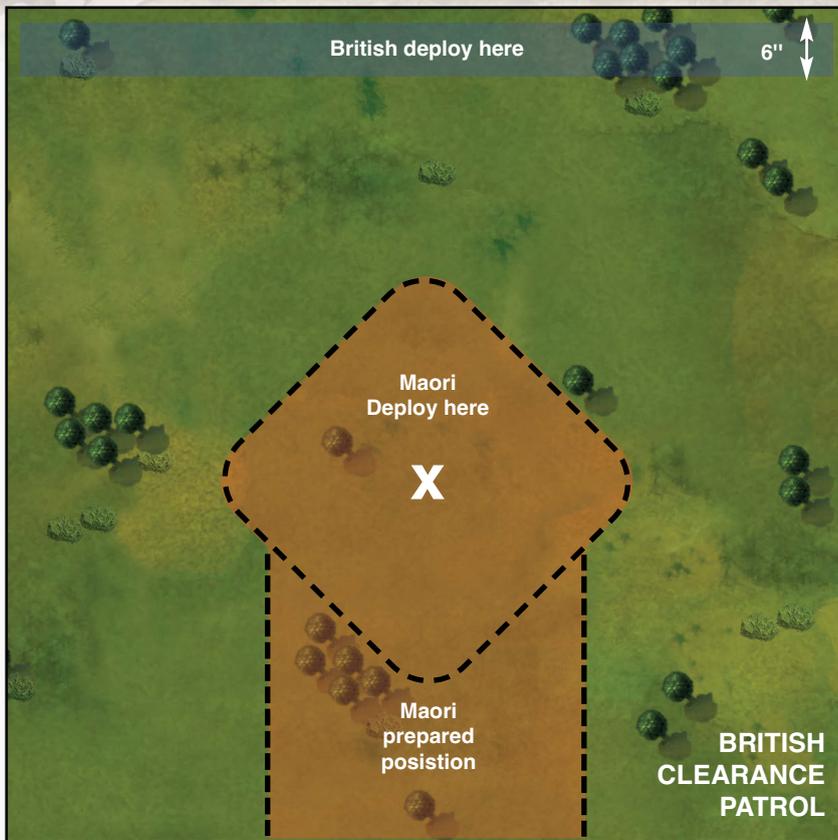
often found if the British passed through a Maori defensive position. The British are looking to destroy the Maori and the Maori are trying to escape with as many men as possible. During the real action the British outnumbered the Maori by around 6 : 1 (1,000 against roughly 150). If played this way there is only going to be a British victory. I suggest a balance of 3:1. This gives the British enough resources to attack with confidence, but it is not so much as to immediately swamp the Maori player.

WAIREKA

This should be played as a version of *British Patrol* (see above). In this version

the British regular force is replaced by militia and volunteers who are in their first action. They have been tasked to act as a flanking force and rendezvous with the regulars and also collect any stragglers from outlying settlements. The main effort is to get to the rendezvous which is straight at the other end of the road from the entry point. The militia have to take a morale check every time they come under fire. If they fail the group will move into the nearest cover. The idea of the game is for the militia commander to appreciate the difficulty he has in having a clear idea what he is up against and therefore getting his troops up the board. If playing using





night march through thick bush in order to reach its starting line. At around 7 a.m. the howitzers fired and breached the stockade. The attacks from the main column went in first and then the second column, hearing firing, moved soon after. (The columns could not see each other). The main column went in against the stockade. This was not really the heart of the position, though the British did not realise this at the time. The attack went straight against it and they were shot at from the main Maori positions to their flank. The force was unable to close and Nelson ordered the withdrawal, picking up the cut off column on route. Whilst this was happening the 40th Foot column attacked the second hill independently. They came up against the trenches and were broken up into three groups. Two managed to escape and one was driven into swamp and shot down. The Maori did not come into close combat but shot effectively. The British casualty list was around 100, the Maori lost five killed.

In reality the attack broke into two separate actions. The game could be played out on two different tables with the Maori player able to switch resources from one table to another. (He knows the ground and the two hills formed a part of one complete defensive system.) The game could be completely changed from the start to allow the Maori player to devise his own defences and then for the British player to divide his forces as he sees fit. If the entire British force had attacked as one, could it have broken into the position?

'Legends' I would use the British regular profile for the militia but reduced the Fight to 3 (F3) and the Pluck to 2 (P2).

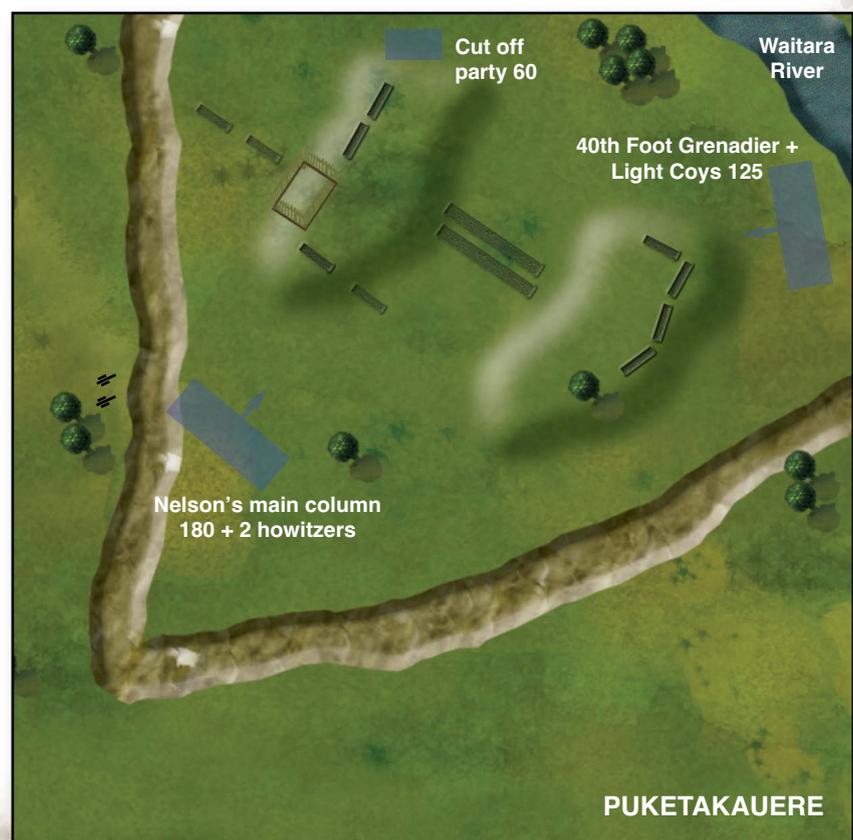
During the real action the militia were 160 strong. Estimates for Maori engaged against both the militia and the regular column are about 200. As the militia were the smaller column I would set the Maori force at around 70 giving the British an advantage of over 2:1. The Maori did not wish to close and were content to snipe and loot. This should be the case in the game as well.

PUKETAKAUERE

This was the one major British assault and their one significant defeat. The British force was divided into three columns

1. 180 strong including a naval brigade of 68 men, under the commander Major Nelson, supported by two howitzers, tasked with assaulting the obvious stockade position
 2. 125 strong and made up of the grenadier and light companies of the 40th Foot. This was to assault the low hill without visible defences and support the main column in the final assault on the stockade from the opposite side.
 3. A force of around 60 to set up to the rear of the enemy position and act as a cut off.
- I do not have an exact number for the Maori defenders, though it was unlikely to have been more than 200 at the very most. The defensive position was described as

follows: There were two swampy gullies which formed a V shape. In between were two low hills. One had the stockade which was visible to the British. The other appeared to be lightly defended. This was however the main position and had a strong trench network. The British were to approach through the mouth of the V. The column of the 40th Foot had a



PUKETAKAUERE