

# The Future of New Zealand War Sites and Landscapes

NIGEL PRICKETT  
AUCKLAND WAR MEMORIAL MUSEUM

Among the most important episodes in the history of this country was the warfare between Maori and European in the mid-19th century (Fig. 1). Fighting began in the 1840s and did not end until the early 1870s. War shifted the balance of power from Maori to Pakeha, putting land and government alike in European hands. The results are only now being renegotiated.

The New Zealand Wars were not just historically important, but were a huge demonstration of passion and commitment. The sacrifices that were made, the terrible events that occurred, the action and heroism - and the blunders - did not occur in thin air but in the familiar landscape around us. A recently published book introduces the landscapes and sites of the different campaigns, with how to get there directions for visitors, and a narrative which tells of their significance in the wars as a whole (Prickett 2002).

The important historical and archaeological landscape of the wars is now coming under great pressure with rapid changes in land use, in precisely those parts of New Zealand that were most fought over - and for the same reason: this is the most populated and productive and desirable land. There is an urgent need to consider now what parts of this historic landscape we wish to preserve for the future, before it is too late.

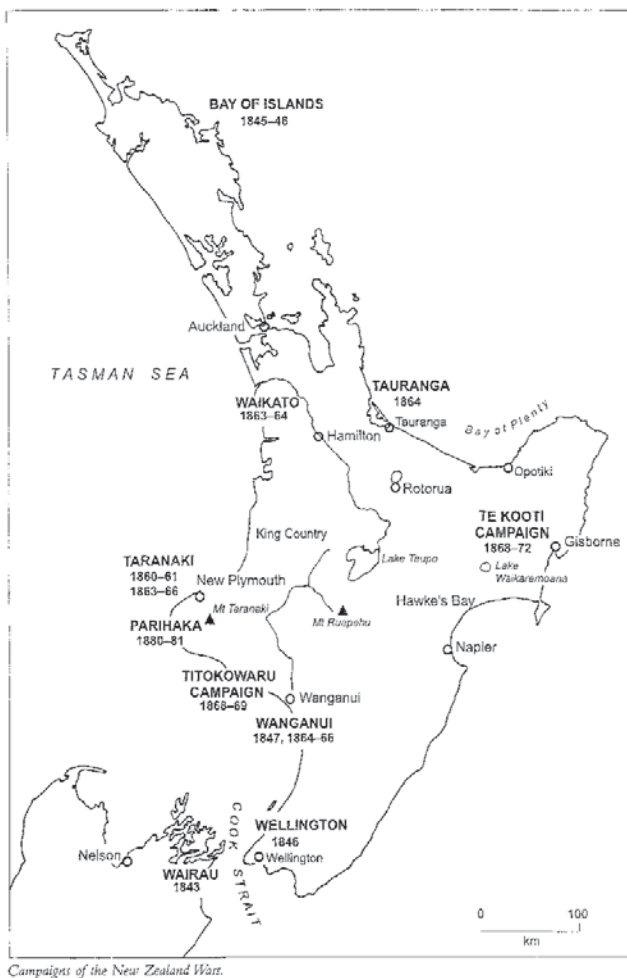


Fig. 1 Campaigns of the New Zealand Wars.



Department of Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*

## THE CAMPAIGNS

Conflict between Maori and Pakeha increased after the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, despite the treaty purporting to protect Maori interests. This

was, of course, because of vastly increased European settlement, and the setting up of a government that claimed jurisdiction over both races.

How could Maori maintain their political independence, and retain their lands, forests and fisheries - as undertaken in the Treaty, when a colonial government assumed control over all of New Zealand, and immigrants poured into the country looking for a new life? In *'Making Peoples'*, James Belich (1996) writes of a process of 'swamping' - the great number of newcomers simply overwhelmed the relatively few Maori in most parts of the country. There were about 60,000 each of Pakeha and Maori in 1858. By the end

of the 19th century just one in every 20 New Zealanders was Maori.

For a while, however, Maori had the power to deter European incursions. In 1843 near modern Blenheim, Ngati Toa killed 22 Nelson settlers when they sought to arrest Te Rauparaha and Te Rangihaeata on the grounds that they had burned surveyors' huts. The real issue of course was land.

The first campaign of the New Zealand Wars took place in the Bay of Islands in 1845-46. The 'Northern War' was as much between Maori parties as between Maori and Pakeha. Kawiti's great fighting pa, Ruapekapeka (Fig. 2), and Auckland's Albert Barracks wall in the University of Auckland grounds are among important sites of the period.

In the 1840s there was fighting also in the Wellington and Wanganui districts. Dating from this are the ruins of the unusual defensible two-storey stone barracks at

Paremata, north of Wellington (Fig. 3). The 1860s began with the First Taranaki War of 1860-61. Like most fighting in New Zealand it was

based around fortifications — more than 30 being put up by each side in the 12-month campaign.

The crucial struggle was the Waikato War of 1863-64. Tainui tribes provided the major support for the Maori King and the source of fighting men who assisted tribes elsewhere. More than 10,000 European troops took part in invasion of the Waikato, at the fighting front and in defence of extended communication lines. When fighting ended, at the Battle of Orakau (Fig. 4), troops held a confiscation - or 'Aukati' - line from Pirongia to Cambridge. Supporters



Fig. 2 Kawiti's cannon at Ruapekapeka, near Kawakawa, Bay of Islands

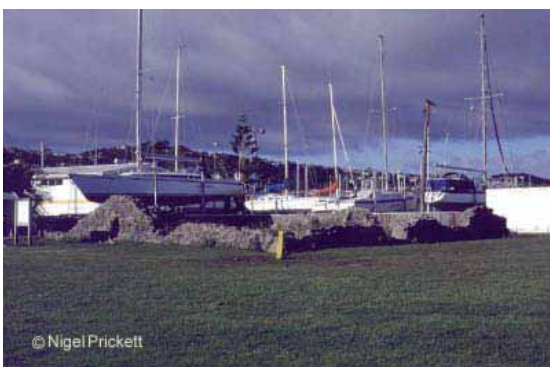


Fig. 3 Stone remains of Paremata Barracks at Paremata, Porirua Harbour, dating from fighting in the district in the 1840s.



Fig. 4 Orakau monument, on the side of Arapuni Road, Kihikihi, Te Awamutu.



Fig. 5 Historic Places Trust plaque at Te Ranga, Tauranga. The expanding suburbs of Tauranga are now close to the site of this important battle of 21 June 1864. A decision is needed if the site is to be protected.

of the Maori King withdrew south into what became known as the 'King Country'.

After the Waikato War was the Tauranga Campaign, notable for the battles at Gate Pa, where local tribes routed a vastly superior force of British troops, and at Te Ranga two months later, where the result was reversed (Fig. 5). Again, land confiscation followed, with much of the fertile country around Tauranga Harbour taken for European settlement.

In 1863 campaigning was renewed in Taranaki. Three years later, at the end of the Second Taranaki War, Pakeha farmers occupied most of north Taranaki, protected by frontier forts. Later Taranaki campaigns pushed the European farming frontier to Parininihi (White Cliffs) in the north and south across Hangatahua (Stoney) River. The 1881 advance on Parihaka was a military campaign, although there was no fighting.

In early 1865 General Cameron headed north of Wanganui with an army of 2000 men. By winter there was a chain of forts on the coast as far as the Waingongoro River (Fig. 6). General Chute's march to New Plymouth inland of Mt Taranaki, in early 1866, was the last campaign

undertaken by British troops in New Zealand. Later that year locally-raised troops were sent to Patea to protect surveyors who were preparing confiscated land for European settlement.

In 1868 the Nga Ruahinerangi chief, Titokowaru, began his struggle to drive Pakeha settlers from Maori land in south Taranaki, and his advance on the garrison town of Wanganui. At the same time, Te Kooti Arikirangi escaped from exile in the Chatham Islands,

and attacked the Poverty Bay district, to be pursued subsequently in a long guerilla campaign until early 1872.



Fig. 6 Kakaramea Redoubt, South Taranaki, dates from General Cameron's 1865 campaign north of Wanganui (photo by A.G. Buist, 1964).

## BATTLEFIELDS

The most significant places of the wars between Pakeha and Maori are those where fighting took place. Engagements and battles at which people fought and died are powerful statements of purpose and commitment. What took place often set a new course for New Zealand history. Ruapekapeka ended the Northern War - and there was to be no more fighting north of Auckland. In the First Taranaki War, Puketa-kauere led to



Fig. 7 The 27 June 1860 Battle of Puketakauere took place around the two pa, Puketakauere and Onukukaitara (above). Since 1975, Puketakauere has been purchased as a public reserve and Onukukaitara, where most fighting actually took place, has had a large water tank erected on it.

## FORTIFICATIONS

Maori or Pakeha fieldworks may be at battle sites - but more often fighting did not take place, the fortifications being thrown up for frontier defence - or they were bypassed as the campaigns moved on.

Maori pa generally were sited for battle-field advantage, to invite attack and defeat the enemy. Some had both tactical and strategic purpose, such as the Meremere, Rangiriri and Paterangi fortification lines in the Waikato, which were designed to halt General Cameron's advance.

In early campaigns European commanders also were largely tactical in

their thinking. So much so in the 1845-46 Bay of Islands campaign that their opponents decided the location and terms of all major engagements. The First Taranaki War is unique for the use of tactical works by the British Army, where the object was to defeat the enemy on the field of battle. But again the initiative was with Maori who usually decided on the place for battle - on their terms.

After the 1863 'New Zealand Settlements Act', the policy of confiscation brought European strategy

into line with political objectives. Settlement of outstanding issues was to be achieved by the occupation of Maori territory. Pakeha fortifications were now largely strategic in purpose - they were to secure the land. They must be strong enough to withstand an attack, but if no attack was made then they had achieved their purpose.

Much has rightly been made of Maori skill in developing fortified pa to withstand artillery bombardment and leave the garrison able effectively



Fig. 8 Rangiriri (20-21 November 1863) was the most significant of all engagements of the New Zealand Wars. The battlefield is cut by State Highway 1 between Auckland and Hamilton.

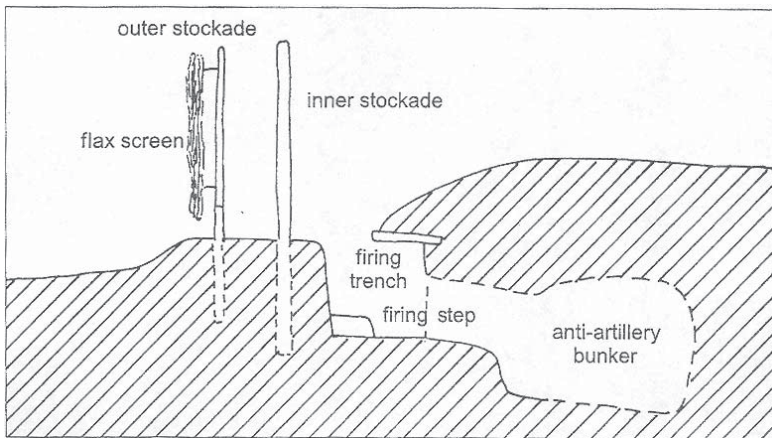


Fig. 9 Cross-section through pa defences of the 1840s and early 1860s. Later pa relied more on a maze of trenches and bunkers and did not have such massive stockades or multiple stockade lines.

Maori engineers dug in deeper, covering underground bunkers with heavy timbers and earth. Pa garrisons sat out a bombardment, to emerge and man the firing trenches when the assault came in. Flax screens in front absorbed fire and concealed damage done to the timber of the main stockades (Fig. 9).

During the Waikato War, Maori engineers changed from the small stockaded works of earlier fighting to long trench lines with multiple strongpoints, designed to prevent the advance of troops. Only at Rangiriri were these assaulted. At Paterangi, the most massive defences of all were bypassed at night - showing that the British command had taken in some of the lessons of previous years.

In 1864, Orakau and Gate Pa had only light fences in front of bunkers and firing trenches, with defence relying solely on a complex of angled trenches and concealed firing positions. The last Maori fortification to come under attack was Te Kooti's October 1869 pa at Te Porere, near Mount Tongariro, plainly but ineffectually modelled on a classic form of

to repel an assault. Such pa were developed out of a centuries-old tradition of fortification engineering.

Pre-European pa had to contend only with hand weapons. With the arrival of guns early in the 19th century, 'musket pa' were developed for inter-tribal fighting, with defenders taking up positions in firing trenches behind massive stockades. When the British Army brought artillery into the equation

British redoubt.

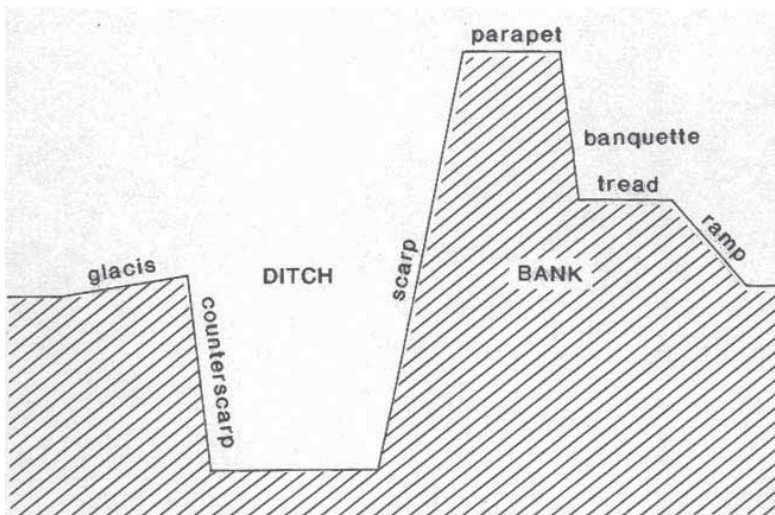


Fig.10 Cross-section through standard European earthwork redoubt defences in the New Zealand Wars.

ft (2.4 m) high. Soldiers stood on a raised 'tread' to fire over the parapet (Fig. 10). An attacking enemy was faced with a 14 ft (4.2 m) bank from the bottom of the ditch, and were exposed to defensive fire from an adjacent bastion, which projected from the main defensive line.

A common form of redoubt had bastions at two corners to cover all sides. Or, the so-called 'New Zealand redoubt' had flanking defence at

European forts were redoubts, stockades or blockhouses. The first was an earthwork which could be thrown up quickly, under fire if need be. Timber block-houses and stockades needed a greater investment of time and resources, and were put up where a long-term frontier or garrison role was planned.

Redoubt defences were made up of a ditch dug usually to 6 ft (1.8 m) depth, the earth being thrown up to form an inner bank about 8



Fig.11 Mataitawa Redoubt, north Taranaki, has been ploughed many times but still shows up in the late afternoon sun, and is an important archaeological site.

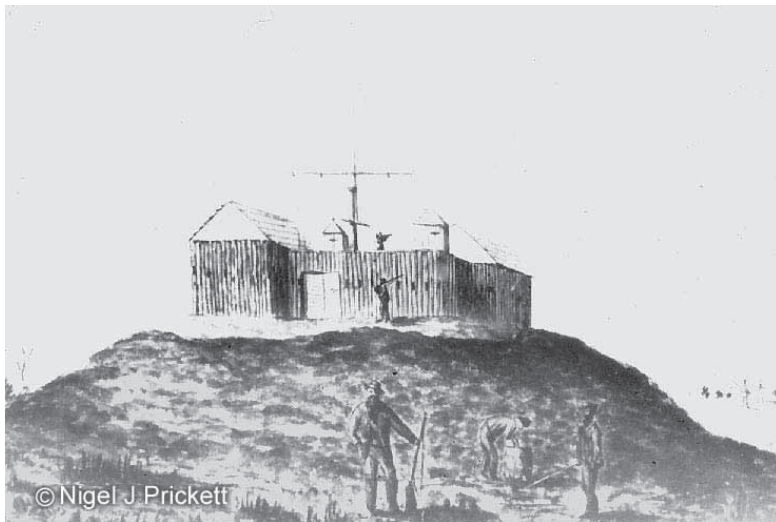


Fig.12 The January 1861 Matarikoriko Stockade, near Waitara in Taranaki, is an example of a small European stockade (from Cowan, *The New Zealand Wars*, Vol. I, p. 198).



Fig.13 St John's Redoubt, Manukau City, was put up in 1863 to protect the Great South Road leading to the Waikato.

all four corners, each covering one side (Fig. 11).

Other works were laid out in a variety of shapes depending on the constraints of the site and wishes of the engineer in charge. Earthwork redoubts were suited to small scale New Zealand warfare.

Stockades were made of whole or split timbers 12-14 feet (3.6-4.2 m) high enclosing a small yard (Fig. 12). Defenders fired through rifle slits in or between the timbers. Blockhouses were stand-alone defensible buildings, of one or two storeys, again with rifle slits, or they made up part of a stockade or redoubt fortification as a loopholed bastion. Blockhouses might also be used as barrack buildings within a larger work.

Of more than 200 European fortifications dating from the New Zealand Wars, most were frontier posts, or were sited to protect lines of communication. An example is St John's Redoubt which overlooked the Great South Road; it is next to Redoubt Road and opposite Manukau City centre (Fig. 13).

An armed frontier between Waikato and the King Country was maintained until the 1880s when King Tawhiao formally laid down his weapons. As late as 1881, Matamata landowner J.C. Firth built an extraordinary concrete lookout tower and refuge, which may still be seen near the town.

## MONUMENTS GRAVES AND CHURCHES

As many as 2000 Maori may have lost their lives in the fighting, 250 of these fighting on the government side. Europeans killed number about 550. In many districts there

are graves, monuments and churches relating to the wars, which are an important part of the historic landscape.

Some churches date from before the wars, and may have had fighting nearby, as, for example, Christ Church, Russell, or were used as a refuge as in the case of St Paul's, Rangiaowhia. Other churches were made defensible by an enclosing stockade (Pukekohe East Church and St Bride's, Mauku), or earthwork (Hiona, now St Stephen's, Opotiki). The Matawhero Church near Gisborne is the only building of the district to survive Te Kooti's raid in November 1868.

Some churches have monuments and graves in the building or churchyard that relate to fighting in the district. Outstanding is St Mary's, New Plymouth, where regimental hatchments line the interior walls and stones mark war graves in the churchyard.

Churches dating from after the wars may also have links with the period. St Michael's Church, Ohaeawai, was built on the site of Kawiti's famous pa, with the soldiers who were killed in the attack of 1 July 1845 later reburied by Maori in the churchyard, and hence, unusually, an inscription in Maori over European dead. The officers killed at Ohaeawai are buried at the church of St John the Baptist at Waimate North.

Numerous memorials remember engagements and the dead of the New Zealand Wars. The first was erected in 1850 at the Anglesea Barracks, Hobart, in memory of men of the 99th Regiment killed in New Zealand during the Northern War. The regiment was subsequently in Tasmania from 1848 to 1856. This is the oldest war memorial in Australia. The oldest in New Zealand was dedicated in Moutoa Garden, Wanganui, in December 1865, to Maori killed in May 1864 at Moutoa on the Whanganui River.

There are war graves in churchyards, cemeteries and isolated places in many parts of the North Island. Most, it must be said, are of European dead. When it was possible, Maori were careful to remove their dead from battlefields, and their burial places are not usually marked. In some cases Maori and Pakeha casualties are side by side - as in the Mission Cemetery, Tauranga. At Mahoetahi near Waitara the government has erected a cross to mark the battlefield grave of Maori dead.

## THE SITES

The New Zealand Wars were critical in our history; visiting battle-sites and other places relating to the wars can be a journey of discovery; not just increasing one's knowledge, but leading also to understanding of the period and its results. Many New Zealanders have ancestors who fought in the wars, so that visits to particular places may be significant personal pilgrimages.

Historic areas and places relating to the conflict are important for the public interpretation of important events in our history, and for significant new knowledge that may be gained from their study.

Some war sites are in historic reserves, especially in Waikato and north

Taranaki, but other districts, such as Wanganui, have few or no sites in public ownership. Most war sites in public ownership are managed by the Department of Conservation; others are in local authority, New Zealand Historic Places Trust, Anglican Church and other ownerships. Many more sites are on private land, even important historic places such as Waiari and Orakau in the Waikato, Te Ranga, near Tauranga, and Nukumarū and Otapawa north of Wanganui.

All archaeological sites relating to the New Zealand Wars are protected by law, and may not be damaged or destroyed except by permission of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust. Physical remains may be visible on the ground surface or hidden in the soil below. Visible and invisible remains are protected, and are equally important for the stories they tell.

Despite the protection afforded by the Historic Places Act site destruction and attrition has increased in recent years. Most destruction is the result of development pressure as land-use intensifies or changes. Fortification and other earthwork sites can become invisible in a few years under intensive stocking regimes. Many important sites have been destroyed without any reference to local authorities or the Historic Places Trust, while some have been destroyed after poor quality planning decisions by local authorities. In recent years illegal digging by militaria collectors and bottle hunters has done enormous damage to some sites.

While some landowners are careful stewards of important historic places, it is not fair that they should bear the whole cost of caring for sites, and perhaps also the disadvantage of being unable to sell to the land's full development potential. As it is the community that benefits from the preservation and public access to historic sites, the community must in the end take responsibility.

This raises the issue of further public acquisitions of important war sites, and why some places are in public ownership and others not. In the Waikato, Whangamarino Redoubt, not a particularly important historic place, is safe in public ownership, whereas Orakau is not, despite being one of the most significant of all New Zealand War sites for the well-known story of its defense and the historical outcome of the battle.

Sites need to be reviewed, regionally and nationally, and according to the various phases of the wars, to allow recommendations on the protection of sites with significant archaeological remains, and which have an important story to tell. It can be too late to preserve a site when a development proposal is well advanced. We also need to consider how to protect battlefield landscapes and the physical context around key sites for future public interpretation.

Many more European than Maori sites are in public ownership. Protection may be desirable for other important Maori sites. Also, although many more Maori than Europeans were killed in the wars, most of the monuments that can be visited are to European dead. I recently attended the unveiling for a memorial plaque to Maori killed in the engagement at Katikara River on 4 June 1863 on the Taranaki coast. There are many other places in New Zealand also where such sacrifices deserve to be better remembered.



## NORTH TARANAKI

North Taranaki provides an example of the rapid loss of New Zealand War sites. While most reserved historic sites in the region are Maori in origin, almost all of these are from the pre-European period. In rare cases historic reserves include pre-European and New Zealand Wars sites.

Most New Zealand War sites, Maori and European, have been destroyed in the course of land development for farming or other purposes. The pace

of destruction has quickened in recent years with land-use changes, especially the development of lifestyle blocks.

Recent losses in North Taranaki include Timaru Redoubt and Mimi Stockade, where houses have been built on the sites. Elsewhere, pines have been planted over significant historical sites or landscapes: as at Ahu Ahu (Fig. 14) and Waiiti Redoubt. Many more sites are suffering from the general attrition of increased stocking rates and other unsympathetic farming practices.

South of New Plymouth, the area at the seaward end of Pitone Road has a rich landscape of war sites, including Fort Strange dating from 1860 in the First Taranaki War, a pa attacked by General Cameron in 1863 in an important engagement at the start of the Second Taranaki War, and St George's Redoubt of the same campaign (Fig. 15). Nearby Bayly's Farm AC Camp (Parihaka Campaign 1880-81) survived until the early 1980s when it was destroyed in a day by a new land-owner putting in a farm race. Sub-division for life-style blocks is now under way in this district.

I have recently come to the pessimistic view that in parts of the country now undergoing rapid development, archaeological sites not in public ownership will not

survive in the long term. Today's interested and sympathetic landowner will not be there forever, and anyway will seldom if ever change land-use practices to stop site attrition. The next owner or the owner after that will destroy the site, either suddenly or by attrition. Most archaeological site destruction or loss is occurring without any reference to local authorities or the New Zealand Historic Places Trust.



Fig. 14 At Ahu Ahu, near Oakura in Taranaki, pine trees have recently been planted over the zig-zag trench from which Maori ambushed a small military party on 6 April 1864, to signal the start of the new - 'Pai Marire', or 'Hau Hau' - phase of the New Zealand Wars. Without great care the important historic site will be destroyed when the trees are felled.



Fig. 15 St George's Redoubt, Tataraimaka, south of New Plymouth, can be made out above the hedge in the centre of this 1975 aerial photograph. Today the important 1863 fortification is nearly invisible after another quarter of a century of intensive farming.

Sites of the New Zealand Wars are important for public interpretation at the actual place where important and stirring events took place. All have stories to tell of this important period in our history; and they can tell us much more through archaeological excavation. We are rapidly running out of time to make informed decisions about the sites and places we wish to save.

Note: All illustrations taken by the author unless otherwise credited.

## REFERENCES

- Belich, James 1996. *Making Peoples*. Allen Lane The Penguin Press, Auckland.
- Cowan, James, 1922-23. *The New Zealand Wars*. Government Printer, Wellington.
- Prickett, Nigel, 2002. *Landscapes of Conflict*. Random House, Auckland.