

2. Bay of Islands

The only military conflict of the New Zealand Wars north of Auckland was the 1845-46 Bay of Islands campaign, or 'Northern War'. This was fought between sections of Nga Puhī under Hone Heke Pokai allied to Kawiti's Ngāti Hine, against British and colonial European forces alongside other sections of Nga Puhī under Tamati Waka Nene and Te Taonui. Fighting began with a successful Māori attack on the Pākehā town of Kororareka (Russell) and continued with European attacks on inland pā at Puketutu (May 1845), Ohaeawai (June and July 1845) and Ruapekapeka (January 1846). The only clear success on the government side was by Nene's Nga Puhī at Te Ahuahu (June 1845).

See also Chapter 3 for Pākehā works in Auckland relating to the Northern War.

2.1 Lower Blockhouse

Q05 (c. 2612950E 6659600N); no site record, not located; Fig. 16

Russell; north end of town on low hill near Flagstaff Road.

For the history of this fort see Maiki Blockhouse (2.2) and Polack's Stockade (2.6). Soldiers driven from Maiki Blockhouse early in the morning of 11 March 1845 withdrew to the Lower Blockhouse, which they occupied until ordered to evacuate after gunpowder store at Polack's Stockade exploded (Wards 1968: 120-124; Cowan 1983 I: 22-33).

A contemporary sketch (Fig. 16) shows a smaller building than at Maiki Blockhouse.

No known remains.

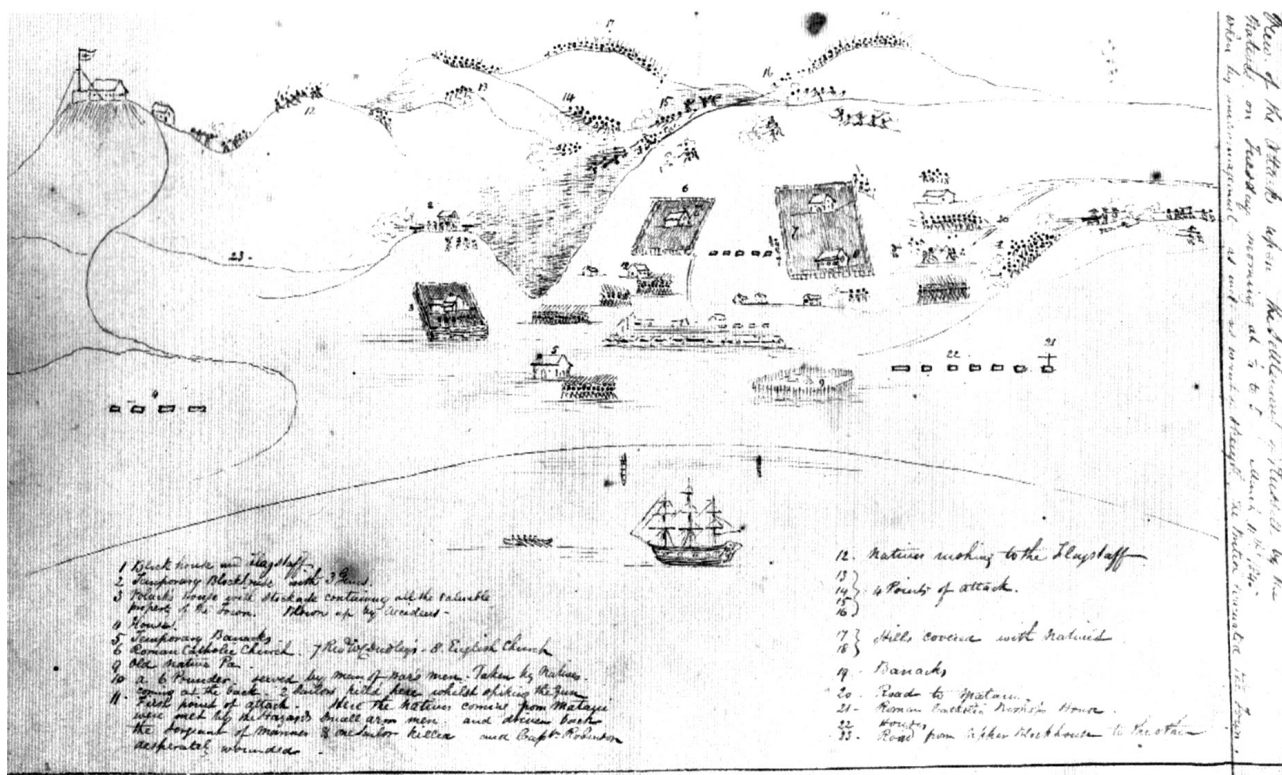


Figure 16. 'View of the attack upon the settlement of Russell by the natives on Tuesday morning at 1/4 to 5'. Sketch of the attack on Russell, 11 March 1845, showing the Maiki (Flagstaff) Blockhouse on the skyline at left, Lower Blockhouse at mid-left and Polack's Stockade below. William Bambridge, Diaries, Ref: MS-0130-249, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

2.2 Maiki Blockhouse

Q05/709 (2612650E 6659950N); N11/473; recorded 1983, update 1984; also Flagstaff Blockhouse, Upper Blockhouse and Signal Hill Blockhouse; Fig. 16.

Flagstaff Hill, Russell; access via Flagstaff Road; at trig '662', 98 m a.s.l.

A flagpole erected in 1840 to fly the Union Jack on a prominent hill at the north end of the town of Kororarereka/ Russell was first chopped down by Hone Heke in July 1844, then twice more before a stockade and blockhouse were built for its protection. On 11 March 1845 the fort was taken and the flagpole chopped down for a fourth time in an early morning attack by Heke and Kawiti. The garrison fled to Lower Blockhouse (2.1), before Polack's Stockade (2.6) blew up and Russell was then evacuated. Māori forces then sacked the town (Wards 1968: 120–124; Cowan 1983 I: 22–33).

A contemporary sketch shows a loopholed single-storey blockhouse with the flagpole in a small stockade at one end (Fig. 16).

A 20 × 20 m blockhouse platform with external ditch is in good order; the present flagpole dates from 1858.

2.3 Ohaeawai

P05/205 (2588400E 6646700N); N15/16; recorded 1964; Fig. 11.

Ngawha, Ohaeawai; St Michael's Church is built on the pā location on elevated ground 200 m north of SH12.

The pā of local chief Pene Tauī was further developed by Kawiti to withstand artillery fire; troops arrived on 23 June 1845. Despite a week's bombardment having little effect on the defences, Colonel Henry Despard ordered an assault on 1 July, which was repelled with half the storming party of 220 men killed or wounded. Ten days later the pā was abandoned and was then destroyed by the troops (Wards 1968: 153–159; Cowan 1983 I: 49–72).

Ohaeawai measured 100 yards east–west × 40–43 yards (91 × 37–39 m). Stockades were 10–15 feet (3–4.5 m) high, built mostly of whole tree trunks. An outer flax screen absorbed fire and hid any damage to defences. Next was a massive, loopholed stockade with close-set posts and a firing trench behind. A third line behind the rifle trench was on the two forward faces only; the other two sides—against a gully to the rear—had only two stockade lines. Pits or bunkers in the pā gave protection against artillery fire (information from Cowan 1983 I: 50–54).

Much of the site is now occupied by St Michael's Church and churchyard cemetery.

2.4 Otuihu

Q05/398 (2613200E 6652750N); N15/75; recorded 1970, update 2006; also Pomare's pā.

Otuihu, Bay of Islands; on a prominent point over the inlet 1 km southeast of Opuā wharf.

The pā was destroyed and the chief Pomare taken prisoner on 30 April 1845, when detachments of the 58th and 96th Regiments were landed from HMS *North Star* (Wards 1968: 136; Cowan 1983 I: 35).

The pā is of traditional (pre-European) location and form on a steep-sided headland.

Now under pasture, trees and scrub, with some recent damage.

2.5 Pakaraka

P05/228 (2597600E 6647800N); N15/44; recorded 1969, update 1992.

Pakaraka, Moerewa; 500 m east of Ludbrook Road, east of Puketotara Stream; site identified by Leahy and Nevin (1993: 27),

The pā of the chief Haratua was sacked by British troops from Waimate on 16 July 1845, after the British defeat at Ohaeawai (2.3; Buick 1926: 189).

No recorded indication of gun-fighter defences.

Under pasture; extensive earthworks indicate a traditional hill-top pā; archaeological excavations in 1983–84 (Leahy & Nevin 1993).

2.6 Polack's Stockade

Q05 (c. 2612800E 6659450N); no site record, not located; Fig. 16.

Russell; north end of town, near York Street.

From 1844 the likelihood of fighting in the Bay of Islands grew and Pākehā military and civilians moved to secure Russell from attack. On high ground to the north were the Lower (2.1) and Maiki (2.2) blockhouses, while at the south end of town a cannon covered the valley approach from Matauwhi Bay. The stockade around the trader Joel Polack's house was erected as a civilian refuge. But it also held ammunition and powder and during the Māori attack of 11 March 1845 this exploded at 1.00 pm, destroying the stockade. Pākehā authorities then evacuated the town (Wards 1968: 120–124; Cowan 1983 I: 22–33).

A contemporary sketch shows a rectangular stockade enclosure around Polack's house and adjacent yard (Fig. 16).

Condition not known; it is unlikely anything has survived.

2.7 Ruapekapeka

Q06/139 (2614500E 6637500N); N16/185; recorded 1973, update 1998; Fig. 17.

Ruapekapeka; 14 km from Kawakawa via Ruapekapeka Road, access from Monument Road corner; historic reserve.

The third and last European movement inland in the Northern War was aimed at Kawiti's Ruapekapeka pā at 300 m a.s.l. on a bush ridge south of Kawakawa. More than 1100 troops, mostly 58th and 99th Regiments and Royal Navy, plus 450 allied Māori, reached the pā on 31 December 1845. Skirmishes took place before a bombardment on 10 January 1846. Early on 11 January, the pā was found to be empty and was occupied by troops, who then followed Māori into the bush behind, where most casualties occurred (Wards 1968: 199–203; Cowan 1983 I: 73–87).

A large pā, 110 × 80–40 m, situated across a broad ridge descending north towards any attack; double stockade of puriri trunks with a third stockade line in places behind the rifle trench, deep rua (pit) bunkers in the extensive interior, some connected underground.

Under pasture; good order in Department of Conservation historic reserve.

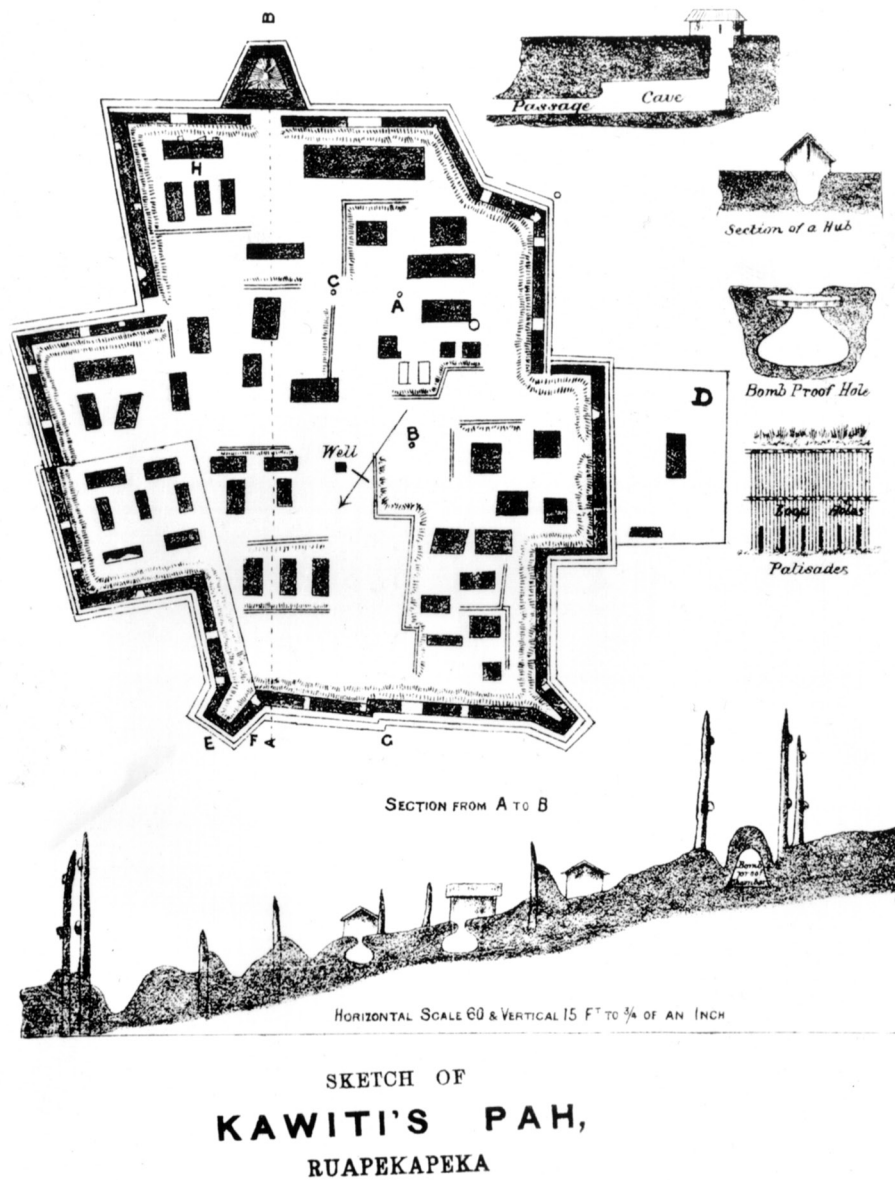


Figure 17. Ruapekapeka plan, section and details of artillery-proof bunkers and stockade. *Auckland Museum C3009.*

2.8 Ruapekapeka British works

Q06/565 (2614350E 6637900N); recorded 2009.

Ruapekapeka; 200 m north of Ruapekapeka and Monument Road corner, on ridge-top immediately east of the road; historic reserve.

Earth breastwork protecting British artillery bombarding Ruapekapeka pā in January 1846.

Under pasture; in good order although not all well defined.

2.9 Te Ahuahu

P05; no site record, not located.

Te Ahuahu, Ohaeawai.

Following the fight at Te Kahika (2.10) on 8 May 1845, Hone Heke moved to Te Ahuahu, a small pā 3 km east. But after vacating it for a period he returned on 12 June, only to find it occupied by the pro-government chief Te Taonui, reinforced by Tamati Waka Nene. Te Taonui and Nene came out of the pā and a fight took place, recognised by both sides as a success for Nene and his allies; Heke was wounded and two major supporters were among the killed or wounded.

Site condition not known.

2.10 Te Kahika

P05/238 (2584300E 6651800N); N15/60; recorded 1970; also Puketutu and Heke's Pā; Fig. 18.

Lake Omapere; northeast side of lake, cut by SH1 at its closest point to the lake (Cowan 1983 I: 48).

Te Kahika was attacked on 8 May 1845. In the pā were 200 men under Hone Heke, supported by 140 under Kawiti within the bush edge to the south. Lieutenant Colonel William Hulme commanded 300 of the 58th and 90th Regiments, 120 Royal Navy and 40 volunteers; allied Māori under Nene were present but took no part in the fight.

Although Pākehā had the better of fighting that took place outside the pā, the pā itself was not taken and the result probably favoured Heke and Kawiti. Hulme then returned to the coast (Cowan 1983 I: 37-48; Belich 1986: 41-44).

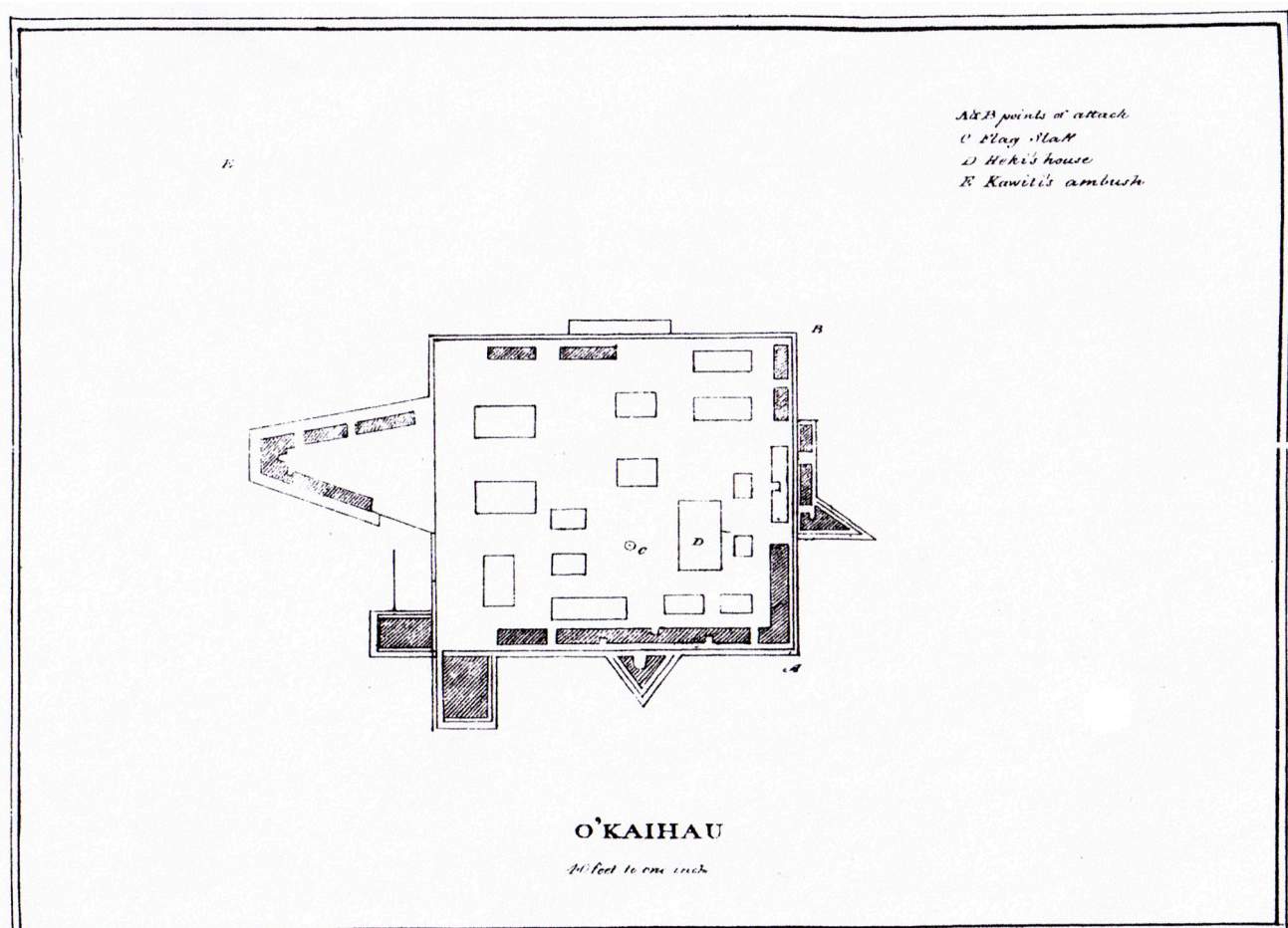


Figure 18. Te Kahika with pits and shaded rifle trenches. From Challis 1990: 10.

Situated on a slight mound, the pā was a rectangular work, c. 60 × 40 yards (55 × 37 m), with defensive angles projecting from three faces. As at Ohaeawai (2.3), there were three palisade lines with the rifle trench firing position behind the second line; heavy boulders were piled against the inner palisade line; there were huts in the interior (Challis 1990).

Destroyed but for subsurface remains.

2.11 *Waikare pā*

Q05; no site record, not located.

Waikare; at the head of Waikare Inlet, east of Opuā.

A pā of the Kapotai tribe, reported to contain plunder from the sacking of Kororareka. Attacked on 16 May 1845 by 200 soldiers from the 58th Regiment under Major Bridge and 100 Māori led by Repa and Mohi Tawhai. The inhabitants were driven out and the pā was then burned and sacked (Buick 1926: 122–127; Cowan 1983 I: 47).

Condition not known.

2.12 *Waimate earthworks*

P05 (2590600E 6653300N); no site record, not located.

Waimate North; at or near the historic Church of England mission station.

After the 1 July 1845 defeat at Ohaeawai, Major Cyprian Bridge ordered the construction of earthworks at the Waimate mission and adjacent army camp. When Colonel Despard returned from Auckland in September, he ordered the works levelled: ‘I could never admit that a European force of between 300 and 400 men, well supplied with arms and ammunition and four pieces of cannon, required any rampart to defend them in an open country against a barbarian enemy’ (Buick 1926: 197).

Buick (1926: 197) refers to substantial earthworks around the camp, so extensive that in Despard’s view, three times the available force could not have manned them.

Assuming a ditch as well as a bank, subsurface evidence for the earthwork will have survived.

2.13 *Waka Nene’s pā*

P05/246 (c. 2580700E 6653600N); N15/7; recorded 1973.

Okaihau; the map reference is c. 800 m east of the associated undefended British camp, which was at or near the location of the present golf course clubhouse.

Waka Nene’s pā in early 1845, from which skirmishing took place with Hone Heke’s force 3 km to the east at Te Kahika (2.10). On 6 May, Hulme’s force arrived from the Bay of Islands and camped nearby, attacked Heke’s pā on 8 May, and departed 11 May (Wards 1968: 139–141).

When told of the plan to take Te Kahika (Puketutu), Nene said that Hulme would not even be able take Nene’s own pā which was not half as strong (Wards 1968: 139).

Condition not known.