HISTORY 316

Group Assignment

Commentary

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For the database, we decided to list the officers first, in recognition of their respective rank. This also enables the viewer of the spreadsheet to see the casualties of the commanding officers and compare that to those of the enlisted soldiers. Those killed were also listed first, as their wounds were not listed and, therefore, did not contain as much information. Organizing the spreadsheet in this way allows a historian to collate information relating solely to those who died, should someone studying this battle want to create a definitive list of how many and which soldiers perished. While there is not much information about the fatalities, an idea of the British loses during the battle is clearly given, allowing an understanding of the immense toll the battle had on the British.

We listed wounds sustained next to the men’s names, as it allows historians to identify weapons used by the opposing Maori soldiers. The location of the wounds also assists with this. For example, the wounds sustained by the 68th Regiment were different to that of those sustained by the 43rd Regiment; these wounds seemed to be caused from blunt force, indicating a close-quarters-battle took place, which involved traditional Maori clubs (mere), as opposed to musket warfare. We also placed the two regiments into two different sections in order to make the spreadsheet simplistic in navigating. It is interesting to note that one man was wounded by a spear in the 68th, which indicates that Maori soldiers were using a range of weapons and were under-armed compared to British, which limited their chances of victory. Not every Maori soldier had access to European weaponry, displaying that many Maori were still removed from British society at the time, as not all of Maori land was under the control of the British.

The source that we used to compile this information was useful to the extent that this source states not only a relatively descriptive account of the casualties on the British side, but even the person who took the record of the casualties (Dr. Mouatt), as well as when and where the battle took place. The information, though, in this source was made public after two and a half months, which brings to mind if this statement is completely accurate.

This source does have various limitations, meaning that a historian studying this topic would be wise to expand research beyond this source. One major limitation with the source is that there is no information on how the deceased died, meaning that there is no accurate way of evaluating how proficient the Maori weaponry was. There were only two weapons mentioned (bayonets and spears), but no mention of close quarters battle; there was only evidence that suggests this. There is no account of how big the regiments were, but only accounts of how many people died and were wounded. The source also does not state that there were definitely other regiments, meaning that there could have been others, if this source was used as the definitive account of the battle. With the exception of one individual, this source does not state when the soldiers died, so as to determine if they died immediately or later as an effect of their wounds (only one soldier is given this description), as well as not stating the age of the deceased. Information on the backgrounds of those who fought is also lacking; information such as, if they served in battle before this conflict, and their own personal backgrounds would help to establish a better picture of the soldiers that the Maori warriors fought against. The experience of the commanding officers would also have enabled an insight into how proficient these British soldiers were. Information about the officers may or may not be available from alternative sources, while information regarding the enlisted soldiers would be much more difficult to acquire. Finally, the source gives not only no figures of civilian casualties, but also not even any figures for Maori casualties. We included in our database everything that was available within this source, despite the fact that the source did lack critical information in comprehensively evaluating the battle. However, this source was, overall, an exemplary piece of evidence, as it provided integral details of the British casualties in the battle.