In order to construct our database, we went through a series of steps. First, during the tutorial session we both read through the primary document/source and identified the key types of information it contained about the individual fighters. These would become the categories in the database. In order to ease collaboration on the database, we set up a Google Drive spreadsheet that would allow simultaneous access and editing. It was then a process of organising data into the categories. Creating the first few categories (“Name”, “Hapu”, “Arms and Weaponry”) was relatively straightforward, as this information was given clearly in the original format. Later, we created the new categories “Physical State” and “Identification marker”. The information of these categories was written with other descriptions given in the source.

Of course, part of the purpose of arranging raw primary data into a database is that it allows us to glean certain information about the Maori opposition to the settler government of New Zealand. Firstly, it seems that, by and large, those Maori fighters who were armed possessed traditional muskets. In comparison, there are only a few mentions of hatchets and one of a taiha. Even so, many Maori were apparently unarmed, or at least were not by the time they surrendered. In terms of the threat to Pakeha settlers, the source is of limited use. Information on armaments only highlights how they could be a threat, but does not tell us about their motivations with regards to Pakeha settlers. Secondly, the notes regarding whether individuals signed the document with their “X mark” provides an indicator of literacy levels amongst Maori warriors. However, this limited information cannot be taken as the only literacy indicator, and this is why we chose to categorise this information by “Identification marker” rather than a title such as “Literate?”.

The data has a variety of limitations, largely owing to certain features of the original source and its creators. The primary issue is that there is a lack of consistency in terms of the notes that were taken about each individual. For instance, whilst it records the arms carried or not carried by many individuals, for others it does not mention at all whether they were armed or not. This also makes the information difficult to categorise. As such, we faced issues in deciding how to best present whether a person carried arms or not. One option was to categorise these through a simple ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ as to whether they carried arms, but this limited the information. Another option was to have separate columns for the differing kinds of weapons, i.e. one column for muskets, another for taiha etc. However, due to the limited amount of information we were given to database, there was not enough variation given to merit this approach. Furthermore, much of the information that is there is exceedingly vague. Noting that Wi Parceone was “sick” or that Era was “wounded” does not give us specific information about these conditions or how they arose. As such, we can’t accurately ascertain what their condition was.

To supplement the information contained in the database, we could also consult other source types. Of particular use might be primary accounts (diaries, newspaper interviews) from Pakeha soldiers or Maori warriors. These would give us a better indication of what occurred at Te Ranga and thus give further insight into the actions and motivations of the people listed in our source.