Commentary: database of Gate Pa and Te Ranga casualties

The decisions we have made in constructing the database included many regarding the layout and organisation of columns.We included the short form of names from the sources provided as some we were unsure of the exact full name.The names of the soldiers are listed with their surnames first as we agreed this is the easier way to search the database. We included the column ‘Died at’ as this is an important aspect of the information gained from the sources provided. The date is provided first as this denotes the time period of the events that the database concerns, the battle they died at is next as this distinguishes which part of the war the men were involved in. The names are organised alphabetically by surname to make the database more searchable.However, the names are grouped into blocks of the regiment they served in and then in order of rank. We felt this was the better way to group the men as a purely alphabetical list would look jumbled and create more work for someone searching the regiments and soldiers who participated in these two battles.

We found some discrepancies between the newspaper article and the pictures of the monument. The name of Captain Chas. R. Mure is recorded as such on the monument but appears in the article as Captain Jas. R. Mure. A search of a current news article and websites pertaining to the New Zealand Wars confirmed the name as Chas (Charles). Further, the article states the Gate Pa battle took place on 20th April as indicated by the date printed as the new monuments inscription. This is also a mistake which features on the monument.

In the article Captain A. C. Turner leads the veterans in the service for the unveiling of the new monument. We did not include him in the database as we felt this database centered around the casualties of the battles of Gate Pa and Te Ranga rather than the survivors.

The other battles that appear on the new monument are not included in this database as we felt they fell outside the scope of the Tauranga battles. Both the battles of Irihanga and Whakamarama took place in 1867, much later than Gate Pa and Te Ranga. They are however included on the newer monument as it commemorates the 1st Waikato Militia that was active during the New Zealand Wars.

Further research was required to understand the military abbreviations used on the monuments. This included D.L.I. (Durham Light Infantry) and navy ranks such as O.S. (Ordinary Seaman) and A.B. (Able Seaman).

The grand monuments show that the men who fought and died in the service of the British Empire are recognised. The monuments only commemorate the British men who were involved in the battles. The article points out that the original monument which is dedicated to the 43rd Light Infantry had fallen into disrepair from neglect. With the construction of the second new monument dedicated to the fallen men of the 68th D.L.I. and the navy, the old monument was also repaired. The monument which each soldier is commemorated on has been included in the database so someone searching can determine where and how they casualties of these battles are remembered.

There are many aspects of the battle and soldiers which were not covered by the information we had. For instance, although we knew that the troops on the monuments came from the British side, there was no way of knowing their nationalities. There is no information on the cause of death either or whether this was in the course of battle or following the battle due to their injuries, the monuments inscriptions do not distinguish who was ‘killed in action or died of wounds’. It would also be useful to find out the types of weapons used by the various regiments.