

# New Zealand redoubts, stockades and blockhouses, 1840–1848

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## ABSTRACT

At least thirty-two redoubts, stockades and blockhouses were built in New Zealand in the years 1840–1848. They were erected for the defence of the local community, to secure a strategic position, or to consolidate a military line of advance. Fortifications were built at Kororareka, Waimate, Auckland, Wanganui, Wellington (including the Hutt Valley and Porirua), Nelson, and Akaroa. An inventory has been compiled and a preliminary assessment made of the current condition and archaeological potential of the sites. Development over the last 150 years has damaged or destroyed many sites and any remains that survive must be regarded as archaeologically important.

Keywords: fortifications, redoubts, stockades, blockhouses, early colonial New Zealand, inventory, condition, assessment.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

At least 32 redoubts, stockades and blockhouses were built in New Zealand by the colonial government or settlers in the eight years following the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 (Table 1). This paper contains an inventory of known sites and a preliminary assessment of their current condition and archaeological potential. Fortifications built by Maori, including those built by allies of the colonial government such as E Puni (Wards 1968: 269), are not included. *The New Zealand Wars* (Cowan 1983) and *The shadow of the land: a study of British policy and racial conflict in New Zealand 1832–1852* (Wards 1968) provide detailed histories of the conflict in this period, which is the context for the construction of the fortifications.

TABLE 1 INVENTORY OF REDOUBTS, STOCKADES AND BLOCKHOUSES.

YEAR	LOCATION	NAME	PRIMARY FORM OF DEFENCE	NOTES
1840	Auckland R11/683825	Fort Britomart	Redoubt/ blockhouses	R11/81. Used ditch & bank of pa. Barracks built early 1841; blockhouses, and battery added later
1843	Nelson O27/338921	Fort Arthur	Redoubt/stockade	O27/57. Initial work completed quickly at end of June 1843 but fort was only completed later in the year (Wards 1968: 79)
	Wellington R27/591908	Thorndon Redoubt or Clifford's Redoubt	Redoubt	Construction began at end of June 1843 but it was left incomplete
	Wellington R27/587896	Clay Point	Parapet	Quickly built at the end of June 1843, battery mounted 2 or 3 18-pr guns behind a parapet on the end of promontory
1845	Kororareka Q05/127593	Polack's Stockade	Stockade	Abandoned and destroyed on 11 March 1843
	Kororareka Q05/130596	Lower Blockhouse	Blockhouse	Abandoned and destroyed on 11 March 1843
	Kororareka Q05/127599	Signal Hill Blockhouse	Blockhouse/stockade	Q05/709. Abandoned and destroyed on 11 March 1843
	Akaroa N36/073124	French Town	Blockhouse	Built between February and May 1845 (Tremewan 1990: 229)
	Akaroa N36/069108	English Town	Blockhouse	Built between February and May 1845 (Tremewan 1990: 229)
	Takamatua N36/074139	German Town	Blockhouse	Built between February and May 1845 (Tremewan 1990: 229)
	Auckland R11/674821	Fort Ligar	Redoubt	R11/1636. Construction began in April 1845 but it was left incomplete
	Wellington R27/591910	Fort Thorndon	Redoubt	Begun and completed in early April 1845 (Wards 1968: 235)
	Hutt R27/691977	Fort Richmond	Stockade/blockhouses	Completed fort occupied by military on 21 April 1845 (Wards 1968: 233–4)
	Wellington R27/589890	Te Aro	Redoubt	Construction begun in late April 1845 (Wards 1968: 234)
	Waimate P05/906533		Redoubt	Built after battle of Ohaeawai (1 July 1845) at army's winter quarters at Waimate
1846	Wellington R27/562900	Karori Stockade	Stockade	Built May–June 1846 (Cowan 1983 (I): 96)
	Johnsonville R27/616967	Clifford's Stockade	Stockade	R27/235. Construction begun March 1846 by local militia (Wards 1968: 263)
	Paremata R26/667102	Paremata Barracks	Stockade	R26/254. Construction begun April 1846 (Wards 1968: 263). Work on two-storey stone barracks building begun in October 1846 but was only completed in August 1847

DATE	LOCATION	NAME	PRIMARY FORM OF DEFENCE	NOTES
	Porirua	Elliot's Stockade/	Stockade	R27/242. Flooded at end of 1846 and re-built on a new site
	R27/646058	Fort Elliot (1)		
	R27/625990	Middleton's Stockade	Stockade	R27/237. Built while road was under construction between May and December 1846 (Best 1921; Wards 1968: 264)
	R27/631009	McCoy's Stockade	Stockade	R27/236. Built while road was under construction between May and December 1846 (Best 1921; Wards 1968: 264)
	Tawa	Fort Leigh/	Stockade	R27/238. Built while road was under construction between May and December 1846 (Best 1921; Wards 1968: 264)
	R27/630020	Leigh Stockade		
	Hutt	Boulcott's Farm	Stockade	Stockade built May 1846 before outpost was attacked on 16 May. Subsequently enlarged (Cowan 1983 I: 104–108)
	R27/715990	Stockade		
	Taita	Taita Stockade	Blockhouse/stockade	Under construction late May 1846 by local militia (Wards 1968: 269–270)
	R27/721996			
	Pauatahanui	Mataitaua Stockade	Stockade	R27/135. Built on site of Mataitaua pa in August 1846. Abandoned 1850
	R27/710093			
	Pauatahanui	Fort Strode	Redoubt	R26/258. A unique, 7-sided trace
	R26/694107			
	Wanganui	Lower Stockade	Stockade	Built by local settlers (Smart & Bates 1972: 66, 69; Wards 1968: 341)
	R22/853389			
	Porirua	Elliot's Stockade/	Stockade	Original site flooded at end of 1846 and stockade rebuilt on a new site nearby
	R27/644057	Fort Elliot (2)		
1847	Wanganui	Rutland Stockade	Stockade/blockhouses	R22/440. Stockade begun late December 1846 and completed by April 1847. Blockhouses added later
	R22/854396			
	Wanganui	York Stockade	Stockade	R22/253. Begun 13 June 1847 (Wards 1968: 341) and completed by mid-July
	R22/851391			
	Wanganui	Gunboat Stockade	Stockade	Completed by third week of July 1847. Collinson sketch (in Prickett 2002: 56)
	R22/857394			
	Auckland	Albert Barracks	Stone-walled Fort	R11/833. Walls under construction by April 1847. Dismantled 1871–1873 (Coates 1990)
	R11/680818			

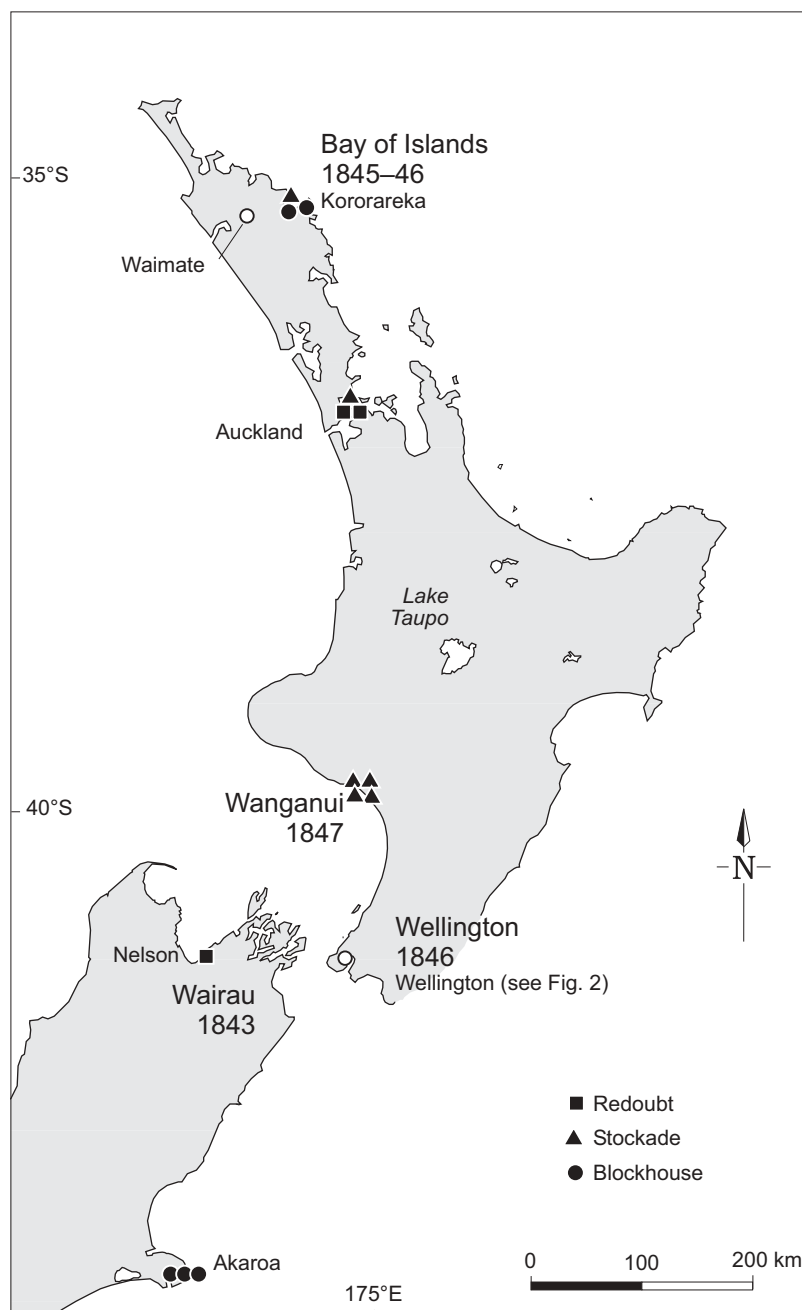
A list of 30 fortifications predating 1850 was compiled by Smith (1989) from secondary sources as context for his study of Fort Ligar in Auckland (Fig. 1) and this inventory is compiled from many of the same sources. An attempt has been made to identify the location of each of the sites to the nearest 100 m but this has not proved possible in some cases. Where the sites have been recorded in the New Zealand Archaeological Site Recording Scheme, the site number is given in Table 1. Sites are listed, as far as can be determined, in the order in which their construction began.

## 2. GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Redoubts, stockades and blockhouses were fortifications, usually erected for the defence of the local population, to secure a strategic position, or to defend a line of advance. The fortifications all relied primarily on the use of muskets for their defence and were designed with an attacker similarly armed in mind. In this period, the effective range of a musket was of the order of 80–100 m. Artillery pieces were sometimes mounted in small numbers.

Redoubts are earthwork fortifications defended by a ditch and with the spoil thrown up to form a parapet on the interior side. Redoubts took a variety of

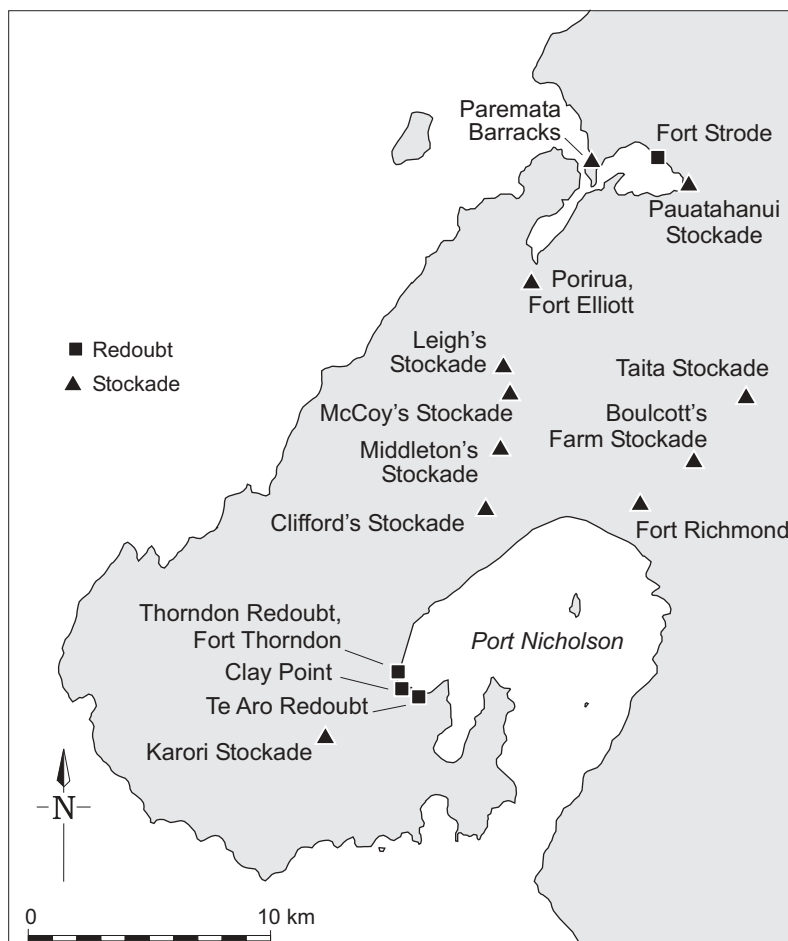
Figure 1. Distribution of redoubts, stockades and blockhouses.



forms. In the 1840s the works were quickly thrown up around, or made use of, existing buildings as at Fort Thorndon (1845) and Te Aro (1845) in Wellington (Fig. 2). Fort Thorndon approached a triangular shape, with maximum dimensions of 325 ft by 300 ft (100 m by 90 m) (contemporary plan reproduced in Wards 1968: 233). Te Aro was c. 420 ft by 300 ft (130 m by 90 m) (contemporary plan reproduced in Wards 1968: 234). Most of the redoubts were in use for only a short period of time. Some, such as Thorndon Redoubt (1843) in Wellington (Wards 1968: 79) and Fort Ligar (1845) in Auckland (Smith 1989: 138), were left incomplete as the fear of conflict receded. Apart from Fort Ligar, there is little evidence of the formal rectangular work with bastions that was so characteristic of the campaigns of the 1860s.

Stockades are made of whole or split logs set against each other to a height of 10–12 ft (3–3.5 m). Defenders fired through narrow loopholes in or between

Figure 2. Distribution of redoubts, stockades and blockhouses of the Wellington region.



the stockade timbers. Stockades were typically square or rectangular with bastions on one or more corners. Some, like Fort Richmond (1846) and Rutland Stockade (1847), had blockhouses occupying bastions. Stockades varied greatly in size. Rutland Stockade was originally 180 ft by 90 ft (55 m by 28 m) (Wards 1968: 341) but most were considerably smaller. Fort Richmond was square with sides of 95 ft (30 m) and flanking bastions at opposite corners (Cowan 1983 I: 95). Karori Stockade was 28–30 ft by 20 ft (8–9 m by 6 m) (Cowan 1983 I: 97). Some stockades were built around existing buildings such as Boulcott's Farm Stockade of May 1846. Stockades and blockhouses were usually built with a long-term defensive role in mind.

Blockhouses are defensible buildings either located within the bastions of stockades, or occupying a position of their own. Fort Richmond had two-storey blockhouses, 15 ft by 15 ft (4.5 m by 4.5 m) and 12 ft by 12 ft (3.5 m by 3.5 m) respectively, each with the upper storey set at an angle to the lower (Cowan 1983 I: 95). The Akaroa blockhouses of 1845 built by French sailors from the corvette *Rhin*, were of the so-called 'New England' style of two storeys, the upper overhanging the lower, as were those at Rutland Stockade. The blockhouses at French and German Town had defensive ditches around them, while the English Town one had a fence (Tremewan 1990: 229). Blockhouses varied in size: one of two at Rutland Stockade consisted of two buildings at right angles to each other (60 ft by 20 ft (18 m by 6 m) and 20 ft by 20 ft (6 m by 6 m) respectively) and the other was 40 ft by 20 ft (12 m by 6 m) (Cowan 1983 I: 138).



### 3. MAIN THEATRES AND PERIODS OF CONSTRUCTION

The first fortification built was Fort Britomart in Auckland. It was constructed by the military from December 1840, initially utilising the defences of an earlier pa (Stone 2001: 277). A two-storey stone barracks with loopholes on one side was under construction by February 1841. By September 1842, artillery had been mounted to protect the harbour. Blockhouses overlooking each end of the ditch were added in 1843 after the Wairau incident. The fort was modified and added to for nearly two decades in response to both external threats and local tensions (Cooke 2000: 16–18). The limitations of Fort Britomart led to the construction of Albert Barracks. Work began in late 1846 or early 1847 and the post was dismantled in 1871–1873 (Coates 1990).

Small fortifications were built to protect settlements in times of alarm. There were four outbreaks of fighting in the 1840s and each saw a flurry of construction. The Wairau incident of 17 June 1843 prompted the building of fortifications in both Nelson and Wellington. Fort Arthur at Nelson was an elongated hexagonal earthwork about 445 ft by 259 ft (136 m by 80 m), with bastions at each corner, on the flanks of a hill (from an old plan of earthworks filed with Site Record Form). Within the earthworks, on high ground, stood a stockade measuring 156 ft by 48 ft (48 m by 15 m) (Cowan 1983 I: 94). A contemporary colour drawing is reproduced in Prickett (2002: v). Clay Point in Wellington was a gun battery sheltered behind a parapet, but open to the rear. It was hurriedly built at the end of June 1843. A second fortification (Thorndon Redoubt) was begun at the same time but was left uncompleted.

A stockade and two blockhouses were constructed at Kororareka in 1845 but did not prevent the town being sacked on 11 March 1845. The locations of the stockade and lower blockhouse are shown in contemporary drawings and, more helpfully, in a Russell Museum publication (1997: 24). This event, and local tension in Wellington, set off a further round of hurried construction with forts in Auckland and Wellington. In addition, other buildings, such as the long-since demolished St Paul's Church (R11/682823) in Princes Street, Auckland, were prepared for defence (Lennard 1986: 211). Unusual circumstances at Akaroa, where settlers were under the special protection of the French Navy, resulted in the construction of three blockhouses between February and May 1845. No military use was made of any of the three.

Conflict in Wellington in 1846 resulted in further construction including a number of fortifications built to secure the Hutt Valley and Porirua, and the Porirua Road. Conflict in Wanganui in 1846–7 saw the construction of four main fortifications, with lesser defences at other points.

The three works at Kororareka were destroyed when the town was attacked and abandoned in 1843. Boulcott Farm Stockade came under attack in 1846, and the Rutland, York, and Lower Stockades at Wanganui played key roles in the defence of the town when it came under attack in the winter of 1847. Most of the other works saw little or no action.

#### 4. DISTRIBUTION AND REGIONAL VARIATION

The total number of fortifications identified is 32. Fortifications with stockades as the primary form of defence account for 56% of sites. Fortifications are found in only a few areas: Kororaraka, Waimate, Auckland, Wanganui, Wellington (including the Hutt Valley and Porirua), Nelson, and Akaroa. The Wellington area alone contained 53% of the redoubts, stockades, and blockhouses built in the 1840s. No regional variation is apparent in the form of the sites, but Fort Strode is notable because of the very unusual trace.

Fort Ligar has been seen as a precursor to the New Zealand redoubt (Smith 1989) but there is little sign in the 1840s that redoubts would assume the dominant role they did in later campaigns.

#### 5. SURVIVAL AND POTENTIAL

Archaeological potential depends on what was originally built, what physical remains survived demolition and subsequent redevelopment of the site, and what is archaeologically recoverable. As a general rule, redoubts leave more physical trace in the ground or at the ground surface than stockades, and stockades more than blockhouses.

The number of redoubts, stockades and blockhouses sites known to remain, all only in part, is seven (Fort Arthur, Signal Hill, Waimate, Paremata Barracks, Rutland Stockade, York Stockade, and Albert Barracks). The only standing structures extant are the ruins of Paremata Barracks and a small stretch of the stone wall of the Albert Barracks. It is possible that limited subsurface archaeological remains will be identified at other sites if looked for.

Excavations have been undertaken at only two military sites of the 1840s (Fort Ligar and Paremata Barracks) and the second of these largely involved the removal of debris to expose foundations (Davis 1963). Excavations at Fort Ligar located some remnants of the redoubt. This assisted in reconstructing the ground plan of the fort but demonstrated the limits of what is recoverable in an area subsequently subject to much building and rebuilding (Smith 1989). Limited evidence of floors and artefacts has also been found at Rutland Stockade (Taylor 2002) but some of remains belong to later periods in the history of military occupation.

Ditches of the redoubt at Waimate have possibly been located, but have not been investigated in detail (Slocombe 1992).

Historical evidence relating to individual sites is variable, but includes plans and photographs (Table 2). Table 2 is not intended to be exhaustive but references many of the known illustrations. There are no known drawings or plans for 38% of the sites listed.

TABLE 2 SOME OLD DRAWINGS AND MAPS.

NAME	OLD DRAWINGS AND PLANS
Fort Britomart	Sketch c.1841 reproduced in Stone (2002: 277). Plans of August 1854 and September 1871 reproduced in Cooke (2000: 12–13). Photographs in photo section A1, A2 (Cooke 2000)
Fort Arthur	Painting by Miss Longueville reproduced in Prickett (2002: v). Old plan of earthworks
Thorndon Redoubt	No known drawings or plans
Clay Point	No known drawings or plans
Polack's Stockade	Shown in sketches reproduced in Best 2002: 14–15
Lower Blockhouse	Shown in sketches reproduced in Best 2002: 14–15
Signal Hill Blockhouse	Shown in sketches reproduced in Best 2002: 14–15
French Town	Mantell pencil drawing, September 1848 in Tremewan (1990: 229)
English Town	Mantell pencil drawing, 18 September 1848 in Tremewan (1990: 229)
German Town	No known drawings or plans
Fort Ligar	Summary in Smith (1989)
Fort Thorndon	Plan reproduced in Wards (1968: 233)
Fort Richmond	Pencil sketch by William Swainson in Wards (1968: 270). Also a sketch by Samuel Brees
Te Aro	Plan reproduced in Wards (1968: 234). Some of the earthworks appear in a sketch by Brees (Best 1921: 17)
Waimate	No known drawings or plans
Karori Stockade	No known drawings or plans
Clifford's Stockade	No known drawings or plans
Paremata Barracks	Plan reproduced in Best (1921: Plate 1). Numerous drawings, including painting by Col Charles Gold reproduced in Prickett (2002: x)
Elliot's Stockade (1)	No known drawings or plans
Middleton's Stockade	No known drawings or plans
McCoy's Stockade	No known drawings or plans
Fort Leigh	No known drawings or plans
Boulcott's Farm Stockade	Water colour drawing by Lt G.H. Page reproduced in Prickett (2002: x)
Taita Stockade	Two pencil drawings by W. Swainson, 17 October 1846, one reproduced in Best (1921: Plate 1)
Mataitaua Stockade	Drawing by McCleverty, 1849 reproduced in Cowan (1986 I: 126)
Lower Stockade	No known drawings or plans
Fort Strode	No known drawings or plans
Elliot's Stockade (2)	No known drawings or plans
Rutland Stockade	Numerous drawings, and photographs
York Stockade	Numerous drawings, and photographs
Gunboat Stockade	Drawing by Collinson reproduced in Prickett (2002: 56)
Albert Barracks	Numerous plans, drawings, and photographs. See Coates (1990) for a selection. Particularly important are a plan by Heaphy in 1851 (Coates 1990: 10), and one based on Frissell's 1871 survey (Coates 1990: 23)

## 6. PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF CONDITION AND POTENTIAL

None of the 32 sites is anywhere near intact (Table 3). Remnant surface evidence survives at just three sites: Fort Arthur, Paremata Barracks, and Signal Hill. Proven subsurface evidence is extant at Waimate, Rutland Stockade, York Stockade, and Albert Barracks but in most cases the undisturbed areas are likely to be very limited. Most sites, including four of these seven, are located in towns and cities. Some are in public parks but most have been built over or landscaped so making it difficult to assess what, if anything, survives. Three sites have been completely destroyed: Fort Britomart, Clay Point, and Fort Richmond.

TABLE 3 PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF CONDITION AND POTENTIAL.

NAME	SITE CLASS	CONDITION	ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL
Fort Britomart	Redoubt/blockhouses	Site levelled and ridge cut away	No remains extant
Fort Arthur	Redoubt	Top of hill occupied by Christ Church Cathedral (Anglican)	Traces of earthworks survive in one small area. Archaeological potential probably very limited
Thorndon Redoubt	Redoubt	Built over	Archaeological potential probably low
Clay Point	Parapet	Site levelled and ground cut away. Nothing remains	No remains extant
Polack's Stockade	Stockade	Vicinity of Kent and Wellington Streets. In a built up area	Archaeological potential probably low
Lower Blockhouse	Blockhouse	Exact location not known	Archaeological potential unknown
Signal Hill Blockhouse	Blockhouse/stockade	Protected in Scenic and Historic Reserve	Archaeological potential probably high
French Town	Blockhouse	Built over	Archaeological potential probably low
English Town	Blockhouse	Built over	Archaeological potential probably low
German Town	Blockhouse	Reserve	Some archaeological potential
Fort Ligar	Redoubt	Built over	Excavated 1988 (Smith 1989)
Fort Thorndon	Redoubt	Built over	Archaeological potential probably low
Fort Richmond	Stockade/blockhouses	Site destroyed by erosion and location is now in the bed of Hutt River	No remains extant
Te Aro	Redoubt	Built over	Archaeological potential probably low
Waimate	Redoubt	No surface evidence	Good archaeological potential (Challis pers. comm. 2002)
Karori Stockade	Stockade	Built over	Archaeological potential probably low
Clifford's Stockade	Stockade	Built over	Archaeological potential probably low
Paremata Barracks	Stockade	Ruins of barracks protected	Limited archaeological potential
Elliot's Stockade (1)	Stockade	Exact location not known but area built over	Archaeological potential probably low
Middleton's Stockade	Stockade	No surface evidence	Some archaeological potential
McCoy's Stockade	Stockade	Built over	Archaeological potential probably low
Fort Leigh	Stockade	Built over	Archaeological potential probably low
Boulcott's Farm Stockade	Stockade	Original contours much altered by floods etc	Probably no remains extant
Taita Stockade	Stockade	Exact location not known but on floodplain and close to stopbank	Archaeological potential unknown
Mataitaua Stockade	Stockade	Church and cemetery covers site	Archaeological potential probably low
Lower Stockade	Stockade	Built over	Archaeological potential probably low
Fort Strode	Redoubt	Built over	Archaeological potential probably low
Elliot's Stockade (2)	Stockade	Exact location not known	Most likely site has been built over but some archaeological potential may remain
Rutland Stockade	Stockade/blockhouses	Some remains survive in town park	Some archaeological potential remain
York Stockade	Stockade	In town park. Only small area undisturbed	Some archaeological potential may remain
Gunboat Stockade	Stockade	Exact location not known but area built over	Archaeological potential probably low
Albert Barracks	Stone-walled Fort	One small section of wall survives. Remains survive in Albert Park recreation reserve and vicinity	Good archaeological potential in places

Sites situated in built-up areas, and whose archaeological status is unknown, can be divided into two groups. There is a small group composed of German Town Blockhouse, Fort Thorndon, and Middleton's Stockade where significant subsurface evidence possibly survives. All the remainder are less likely to have such remains and are assessed as having little potential. This assessment is based on consideration of the form and extent of original fortification and the

subsequent history of development and redevelopment but it is not based on a detailed consideration of all relevant factors so must be regarded as preliminary only. Sites in this category are Thorndon Redoubt, Polack's Stockade, Lower Blockhouse, French Town Blockhouse, English Town Blockhouse, Fort Ligar, Te Aro Redoubt, Karori Stockade, Clifford's Stockade, Elliot's Stockade (1), McCoy's Stockade, Fort Leigh, Boulcott's Farm Stockade, Taita Stockade, Mataitaua Stockade, Fort Strode, Lower Stockade, Elliot's Stockade (2), and Gunboat Stockade. Remains could, however, turn up unexpectedly on any of these sites.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

The inventory has identified 32 fortifications that were built in New Zealand in the first 8 years of Crown rule. A preliminary assessment of condition and archaeological potential suggests that very little now survives from this period. Any surviving remains must be regarded as rare and important.

## 8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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