Introduction
Uncovering the Pākehā Past

Archaeology is often associated with the distant past in far off places: Egyptian pyramids, ancient temples in South America, Celtic or Roman ruins across Europe, all capture the imagination of journalists, novelists and film-makers. Or, through the lens of archaeological documentaries, there are fascinating glimpses of human origins in the bones and tools of our earliest hominid ancestors.\(^1\)

But archaeological discovery across the world is a much richer field than this: often local and immediate, and attentive to the recent as well as the remote past. Archaeology can uncover stories about the places we inhabit, through the artefacts, structures and landscape modifications hidden beneath our feet. Parts of those stories may be remembered through written documents, pictures and oral histories; archaeology adds to that narrative and sometimes challenges it, bringing its own kind of evidence and broad perspective. And sometimes it shows that our recent past is not as familiar as it might at first seem.\(^2\)

In New Zealand, archaeological research has contributed significantly to our understanding of the origins and arrival of our first human settlers, the Polynesian voyagers who landed in these South Pacific islands in the thirteenth century. This book takes the archaeology narrative in a different direction, by examining the first nine decades after the indigenous Māori people were joined in these islands by new immigrants. These newcomers were predominantly of European descent, and those who stayed to live in New Zealand are generally referred to as Pākehā. (The term is used flexibly here to include also the early Europeans who came but did not stay, because of their role in the shaping of subsequent Pākehā settlement.)

The account begins in 1769 with the first non-Māori footfall on these shores and extends to 1860, by which time Pākehā were numerically dominant. This was a time of significant change, not only in the composition of the human population but also in the ways people utilised the resources of the land and sea, where and how they chose to live, and how and by whom they were governed. It was also a time of ‘becoming’, when new cultural patterns emerged as indigenous and immigrant groups were shaped by their interactions with each other.