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A DESCRIPTION OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL LANDSCAPE

OF KENNEDY BAY, COROMANDEL PENINSULA

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The often expressed opinion that site surveys have a minimal value within the aspirations of New Zealand archaeological research frequently underrates the information these reports can contain in establishing a particular region's local history. The landscape of Kennedy Bay on the east coast of the Coromandel Peninsula bears witness to perhaps 1000 years of human habitation (Fig.1). Isolated from the mainstream of peninsula life by the Cape Colville Range, Kennedy Bay is one of the less visited and least known bays on the peninsula. This state of affairs is, however, recent history. Two consecutive seasons of site surveying and recording for the Historic Places Trust in February 1977 and 1978 revealed that the bay has throughout the centuries since the initial colonisation of New Zealand supported a population of some size and that it has seen the foundation and demise of several early European business enterprises. It is very much the general story of New Zealand in microcosm up until 1900 after which, perhaps for the first time in the bay's history, it lost its economic attractiveness, with the result that sections of its population moved away and outsiders ceased to come.

In an attempt to provide an historical framework for the archaeological sites I began to research by various means any information which would give some substance to the site records we had accumulated - to build from them a picture of human activity over the centuries within the bay. I utilised anthropology, geography and historical research, early travellers accounts, early maps, ships' logs, mining records, 19th century Auckland newspapers, early photographs, and local informants. It was surprising just how much information could be marshalled from these sources given that Kennedy Bay, on a superficial assessment, had nothing in particular to distinguish it from dozens of similar areas about northern New Zealand. Similar material could, I imagine, be duplicated for many other areas using site records as the foundation on which to build up local histories.

Research based on the Kennedy Bay site survey revealed four periods of intensive economic exploitation prior to its 20th century production mode of pastoral farming and fishing. 1905 was the cut-off point of my research, this year marking the end of the kauri trade and the demolition of the mill and its settlement. The first 800 or so years of the bay's human occupation belong to the Maori; firstly living a traditional

existence, then, with the advent of Auckland and other European settlements, developing market gardens and shipping their produce to the towns. The Maori as an economic factor appear to have been eliminated after 1860 at which time kauri milling became the dominant economic activity within the bay. Slightly later, in 1868, gold was discovered in payable quantities in Kennedy Bay and numerous areas were mined, one or two until the 1930s. Associated with the kauri milling were the ancillary boat building and gum digging industries.

The archaeological evidence

The Maori presence is well represented. Most of the ridges climbing away from the coast to the north, west and south have been modified in various ways by paa, terracing and pit construction (Plate 1). Shell middens are frequently found up to 500 feet above sea level and in many places along the foreshore and its hinterland. So far one archaic midden has been identified - at Te Kapoai beach. A large burial site, a cave shelter, stone mounds, and open settlements have also been recorded. If paa density is indicative of population density then Kennedy Bay with its 17 hill forts was possibly intensively settled throughout prehistory. The paa vary in size and complexity of plan from the largest, Reed's paa, some 5100m² in area on the north side of the bay (Fig.2),₂ to the tiny Kaimakuwea at the southern end of the beach, only 130m² in area. Double ditches are the most common form of defense on the largest forts.

The archaeological remains of the kauri industry are in part superimposed on earlier Maori settlements. The mill was erected on the alluvial spit at the mouth of the Harataunga stream on the north side of the bay. Bricks and rusting mill components are mixed in with the older shell midden and two houses erected in the 1860s still stand. The swamp beyond the spit shows its 19th century drainage channels and the confluence of the Harataunga, Mangatu, and Whareroa streams northwest of the mill site has indications of stream bed modifications, boom gates, and wooden retaining walls. At the south end of the beach, driven into the cliffs of Motukuku point are decaying iron rings which earlier anchored St. Andrews wharf to the land. Running southwest away from the wharf site is the tramway bed of the railway that worked the Harataunga valley. East of the mill site in the next valley is the site of the ship yard constructed in the 1860's. A more recent ship yard has been erected on the site of the first structure but adjacent to it are several terraced areas dotted by mounds of bricks which attest to them being house sites connected to the boat building enterprise.

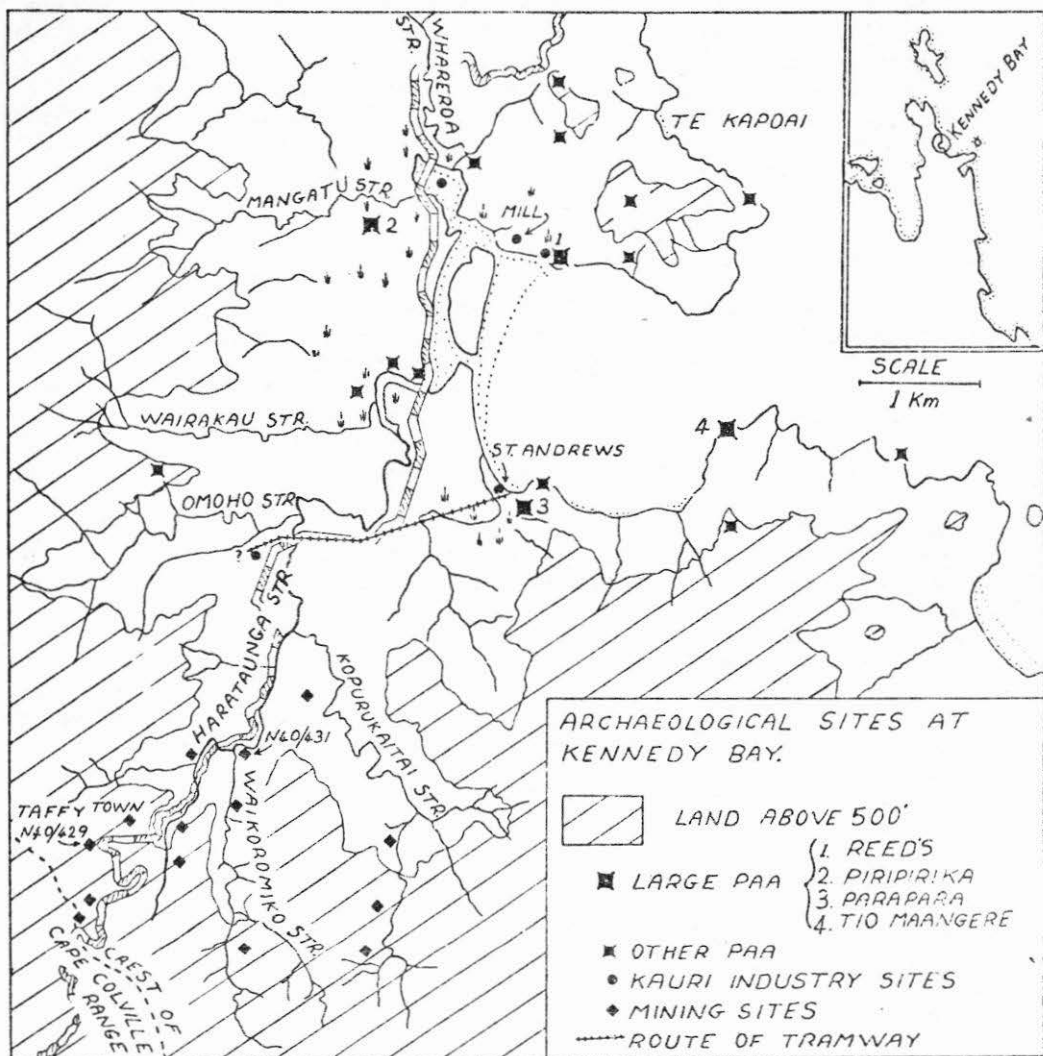


FIGURE 1. Kennedy Bay archaeological sites.

Gold mining sites have been identified by the actual mines themselves, by stamping battery foundations, by water race systems which originally carried water to the batteries' boilers, tracks, and by a few piles of brick, rusting metal and roofing iron, the remains of miners' huts. Without exception all mining sites are under heavy bush cover and difficult to locate as during their period of occupation they were at best only small clearings in the forest. These mining sites are restricted to the Harataunga valley and its tributary stream valleys, an area of very steep, bush-clad hills and rocky streams.

The Maori landscape

In analysing the sites dating back earlier than the mid-19th century one can only fall back on ethnographic analogy, anthropologists' conjectures about traditional Maori life patterns, and early travellers' accounts. Looking at site distribution within Kennedy Bay a factor which perhaps poses some interesting problems is the distribution of Maori fortifications across the landscape. Four paa stand out as being larger and structurally more complex than the remaining thirteen: Reed's paa on the north side of the bay (Fig.2); Piripirika inland from the mouth of the Harataunga stream (Fig.3); Parapara above swamp land at the south end of the beach; and Tio Maangere on the precipitous southern headland forming the entrance of Kennedy Bay (Fig.4). These four are separated from each other by natural barriers - swamp, streams, sea - and none of them is closer than 1.5km to its nearest neighbour. Geographically each of these large fortifications dominates a substantial portion of the bay and within each fort's hinterland is a broad range of sites including several small paa.

Reed's paa shows this general settlement pattern most clearly. Isolated from its nearest substantial neighbour Piripirika by wide tracts of tidal mudflats and swamps, and from the other two by the bay itself, Reed's is nevertheless fairly easily accessible from five neighbouring paa, all of which are considerably smaller in area than Reed's. These small fortifications are constructed on headlands and inland ridges and in all cases can be visited by walking the ridge lines or coast from Reed's. The same pattern can be visualized for Piripirika. Skirted by swamps and the Harataunga and Mangatu streams, Piripirika has four smaller paa within its river demarcated hinterland, all within a 20 minute walk along the ridges from the large fortification. Tio Maangere has two small forts near it, one of which seems to be for storage. Parapara has no subsidiary paa attached to it but the settlement model could perhaps still be applied given its siting in the bay. There is in fact a very small fortification close to Parapara, Kaimak-uwea, but considering its size (four terraces and a ditch) and location, directly under Motukuku point which renders it extremely vulnerable,

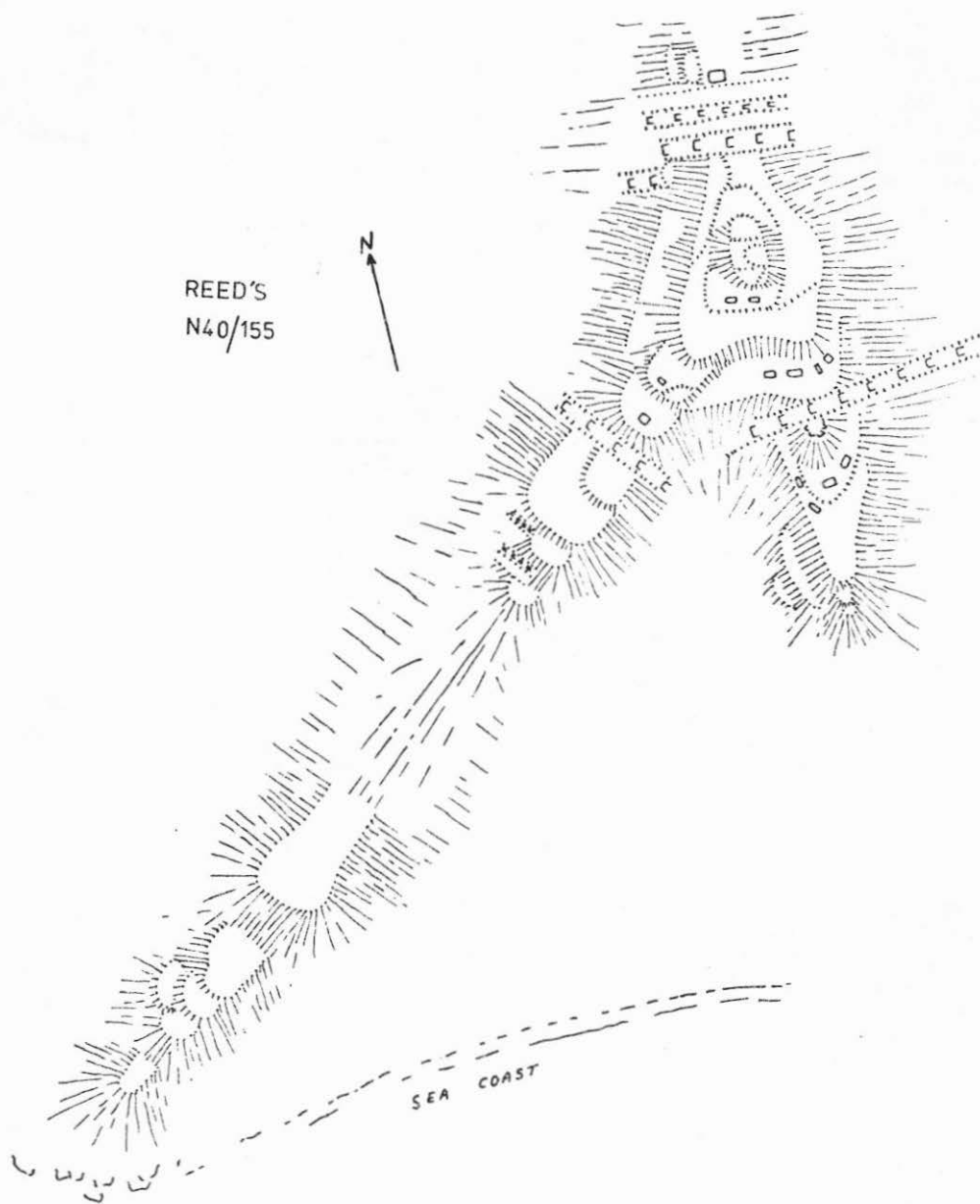


FIGURE 2. Reed's Pa (N40/155).

I would conclude that this site was built by children. Angas in 1844 came across children building miniature forts complete with palisading and such an explanation best fits the incongruous Kaimakuwea.

Only excavation will substantiate the suggestion that each major fort in Kennedy Bay had its subordinate paa, possibly reflecting a situation wherein the large paa could have been used for defence against a common enemy and the small paa for kin-based conflicts within the bay itself. So far the only information which has come to light on Maori settlement in the bay is from the early years of European contact. In 1815 after some nefarious dealings with Northland Maoris, two ships under the command of Captain W. Hovell were attacked by about 1000 men while anchored at the mouth of the Harataunga Stream. The attack was beaten off and in retribution Hovell destroyed the abandoned canoes on the beach and the village from which the attack had originated. This, "stood where 3 streams, meandering down a valley thick with flax, combined to enter the bay as one", a description which makes Piripirika the probable candidate of the punitive attack by the Europeans. An interesting aside in this episode is the identity of the Maori tribes involved in the incident. The missionary Kendall, writing in his diary about the event, blamed the affair on Hovell's dishonesty in business with a Bay of Islands chief. The ambush was revenge in this matter. Five years later, Marsden, while visiting Mt. Wellington heard from a survivor of the affray that the war party were Ngati Maru. What is intriguing is this: why would Ngati Maru claim utu for injustice to a Ngapuhi chief?

I have found very little information about the bay from 1815 to the 1860s. During these five decades the ownership of a large portion of the bay changed from Ngati Tamatera to Ngati Porou, an East Coast tribe, and market gardening developed. The village in the bay during this time was known as Harataunga and had large commercial cultivations producing for the Auckland market potatoes, pigs, fowls, wheat, maize, kumaras, onions, cabbages and peaches. John Kennedy moved to the bay in 1840, originally to collect kauri gum but later inaugurating the timber trade which he continued until his murder at sea in 1843. Access to the large scale charts of the bay made by the 'Acheron' in the mid-1840s and by the 'Pandora' a few years later should provide information as to the location of Kennedy's homestead and the gardening areas of the villagers. As far as I know these maps are unavailable in New Zealand.

The timber industry

After Kennedy's death Kennedy Bay timber resources were not exploited until 1862 when one of the first three steam powered saw mills in New Zealand was erected on the alluvial spit at the entrance to the

Harataunga stream. From various sources I have ascertained who owned the mill for much of its working life. It was apparently set up by a Mr. McGregor and a Mr. Atkins but within a few years Cruikshank and Co. owned it, employing between 50 and 60 men. In 1878 following a widespread collapse of milling enterprises due to over-capitalisation it became the property of the Auckland Timber Co. who maintained it until the late 1880s depression. In 1888 the company sold it to the ubiquitous Kauri Timber Co. - an Australian firm who dominated the kauri timber trade in the late 19th century. Three years later, again because of over-capitalisation the Kauri Timber Company had to relinquish some of its assets and the Kennedy Bay mill was one of these, passing out of the company's ownership in 1891. Its history from this point until its dismantlement in 1905 is hazy, the only name associated with the mill during this period being the Smythe Brothers. Possibly they operated the mill for its last 14 years.

Although evidence in the ground provided the first indications of the kauri industry early photographs and newspaper reports filled out the bare bones of the site record forms. An 1880s photograph shows the mill area as a settlement of over a dozen houses, a large production plant and a wharf. Beyond the mill across the river can be seen whares. An 1873 article in the Daily Southern Cross described the inhabitants of the Maori settlement: "Speaking of the native population I am forced to the conclusion, from personal observation and inquiry, that their habits are anything but steady; that amongst them idleness is the rule, not the exception; that work with the principal portion means squatting in a whare all day and drinking rum." The same article also briefly describes the now vanished township of St. Andrews at the southern end of the beach, a place substantial enough to have had a church, albeit in 1873 one declared unattended and deteriorating. An 1898 collection of photographs of the bay's timber industry by Winkelmann, and some others from 1904-05, give more information about the milling than is apparent upon the landscape today. Individual photographs show the Smythe Brothers settlement (Plate 2), the St. Andrews wharf at several stages of construction, a kauri dam, the bush locomotive hauling logs (Plate 3), a rolling road, and the wharf at the mill site. Most of these sites show no sign of having ever existed when one visits the location today, the few that are recognizable in the archaeological record, such as the anchor bolts and chains for St. Andrews wharf, give no indication of what was really there when the site was being utilised. Similarly several photographs of the bush hands breathe life into the meagre remains within the landscape.

Associated with the kauri milling in the bay was the ship-building business of Alexander McGregor and David Low. Very little is known of the yard's production and the names of only three Kennedy Bay vessels

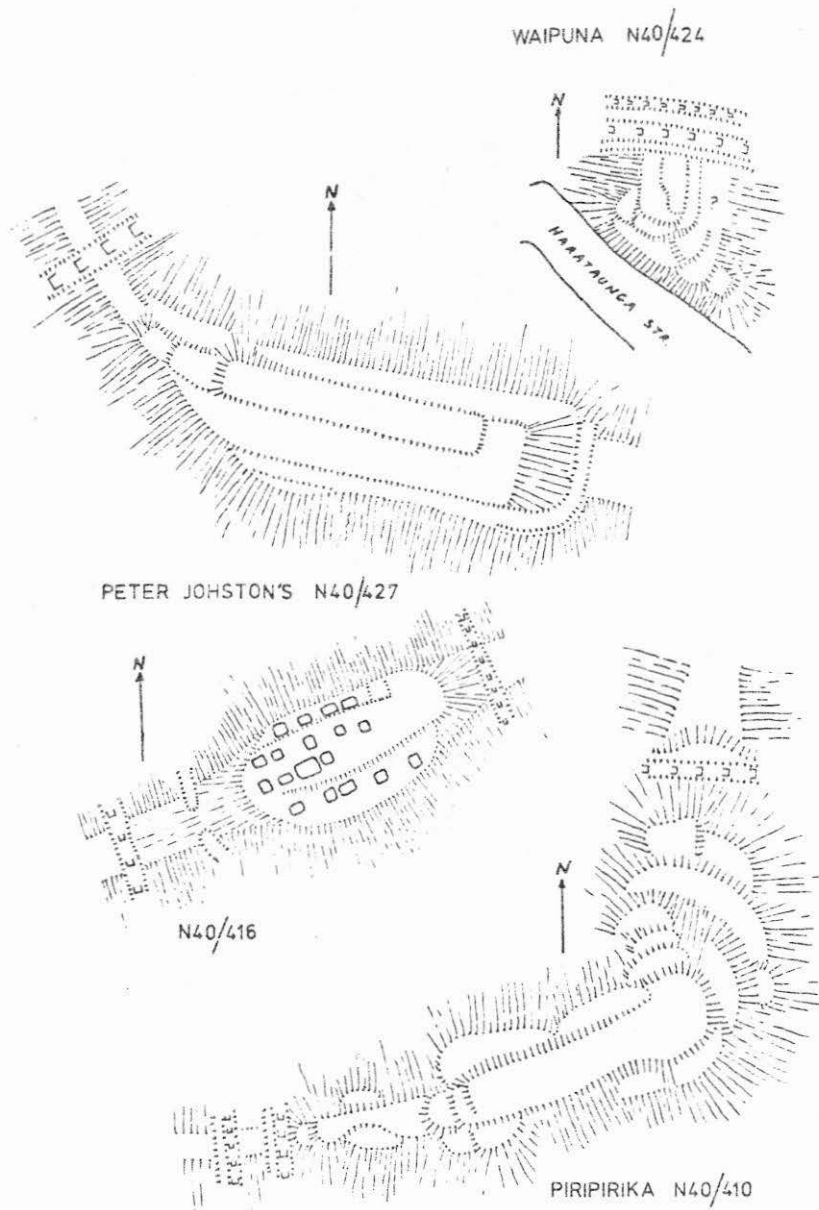


FIGURE 3. Waipuna (N40/424), Peter Johnston's (N40/427), N40/416, and Piripirika (N40/410).

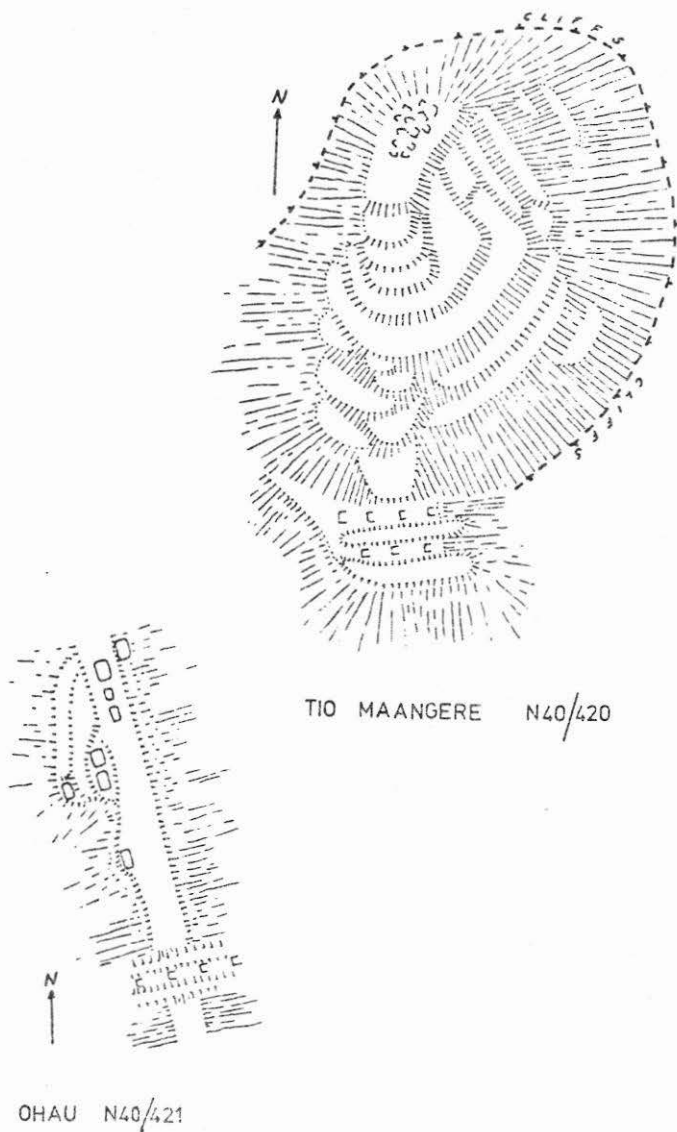


FIGURE 4. Tio Maangere (N40/420), Ohau (N40/421).

have so far been located. In 1865 the Kate, a cutter 47ft 6inches in length with a 14ft 3 inch beam, and the Victoria, a schooner with the same dimensions, were launched. A year later, in 1866, the Woodstock, a cutter 52ft long with a 16ft 4inch beam was completed. The precise year the yard went out of business is unknown.

Gold mining

In researching the gold mining industry in Kennedy Bay it was mining reports in the Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives that facilitated the finding of old claims and stamping batteries rather than photographs. Although the site survey had located three mining sites; two water-race and tunnel systems, and No.7 drive of the Royal Oak mine (N40/429); it was only when research revealed where claims had been staked in the past that we could return to the Harataunga valley and search in definite areas with the expectation of finding remains of mining activities. Consequently two additional water-races have been located, two more stamping batteries, the route of the first road into Kennedy Bay, a miners' track, and the site of Taffy Town, the mining village near the top of Tokatea saddle. With time more material remains should be located, these being the more inaccessible claims in the upper valleys.

Of the mining sites one of the most impressive examples of pioneer engineering is a water-race system which was built to power the Hauraki (N.Z.) Associated Gold-mines Ltd. stamping battery (N40/431). At the point where the Waikoromiko stream meets the Harataunga a wooden dam was erected across the flow of the former stream diverting it through a tunnel cut into the low bluff the Harataunga stream flows around. On the exit side of this bluff, excavated into the steep hillside forming the right bank of the stream, is the water-race bed which follows the course of the stream but ever increasingly above it. Across the bluff is a system of ditches the function of which I have been unable to determine though obviously it is an integral part of the water-race, perhaps an over-flow mechanism.

Gold was found in a good many places in Kennedy Bay but never in any important quantity. Its potential was first observed in November 1852 by a correspondent of the New Zealander who in the early days of the Coromandel rush climbed the Maori track from Waiau over to Harataunga. He reported:

"The most interesting circumstance, however is the discovery of gold at Arataonga, on the eastern coast. I went there yesterday 'prospecting' and found gold in the first pan washed; no one had previously crossed the dividing Range on the search. The Range is about 2000 feet in height, and is crowned by a sharp ridge of white quartz rock.

Arataonga is a small bay facing the Great Mercury Islands, and is the next bay but one south of 'Port Charles'. Out of six pans washed: four gave gold specks and grains. I have since found it in some quartz from the range. I had not the means to dig down, nor of remaining above an hour in the valley."

The bay was gazetted as a gold field in 1868 and an interesting sketch map of the bay at this time, located in the 1869 Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives, shows areas leased by Europeans from the Maoris and the route of the old walking track to Coromandel (Fig.5). The gold mining industry in the bay followed the same pattern as other Coromandel Peninsula fields. The early period of the late 1860's - early 1870's saw easy extraction of the bullion from the quartz by the simple crushing and amalgamation methods then used on the Californian and Australian goldfields. However once the easily accessible veins became exhausted the generally financially precarious companies which operated the claims could not afford to modernise, bringing about a general economic slump in the area. This was not alleviated until the arrival of English capital and a new crushing and extracting technology in the early 1890's. The following decade, characterised by unified financial control which permitted thorough exploitation of claims, saw the creation of most of the landscape associated with the gold industry in the bay - the tunnels, stream diversions, water-race beds, stamping battery remains, roads and tracks. Virtually all the claims went out of production before 1910 although one claim, the Four-in-Hand was worked until at least 1935.

Conclusion

The interest shown by locals in the finished report on the history of the Kennedy Bay landscape indicates that informal histories written from site reports would be appreciated if more were produced. It seems to be current practice to simply file and forget site recording reports. The only feed-back locals receive is the interaction with the surveyors while they are in the field. The information which came to light with my own investigations shows the quantity of material available to researchers who are prepared to look for it and some sort of synthesis of this material and the archaeological data could be made available to interested local people to whom these sites have the most meaning. My own feeling is that the relationship between the public and archaeological site surveyors has often been one-sided in favour of the latter who, having been helped by local informants, don't return any tangible results of their work to these people after they leave the field. Local histories and discussions of regional archaeology written from site reports could help to make the whole site recording project more acceptable to what is at times a sceptical public.

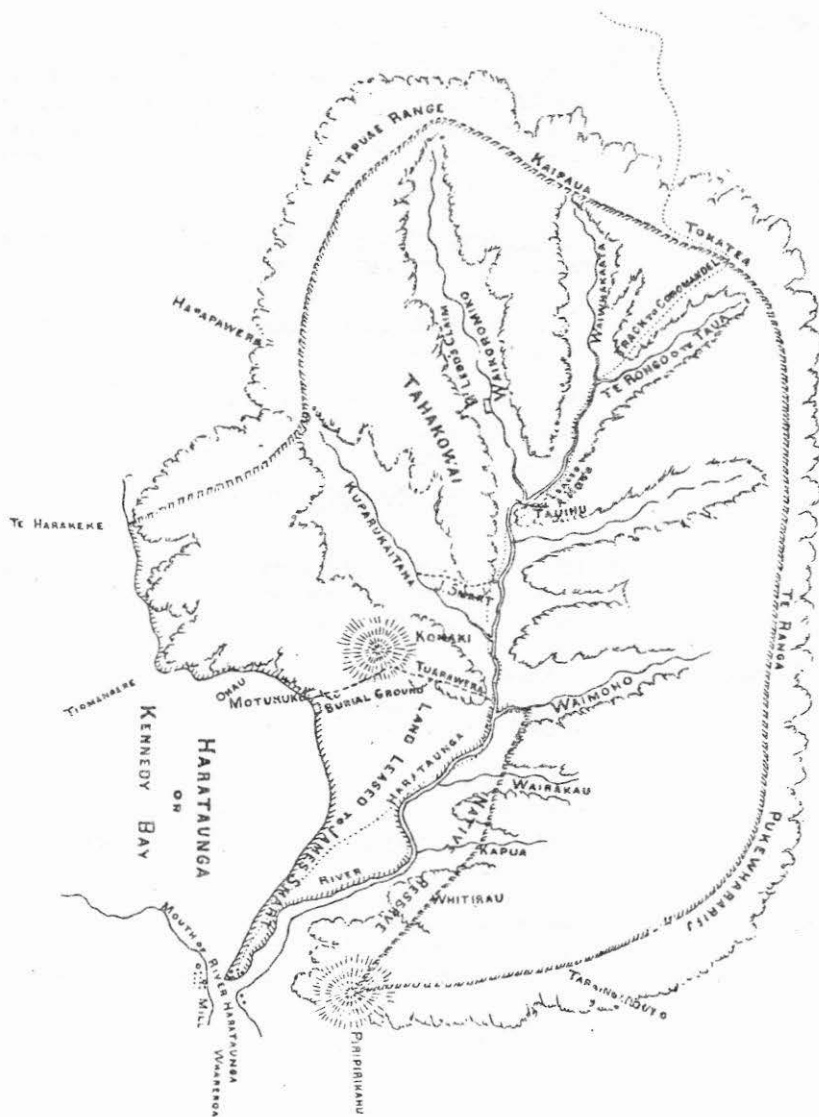


FIGURE 5. "Coromandel District, Harataunga Block (Goldfield)
13 May 1868".

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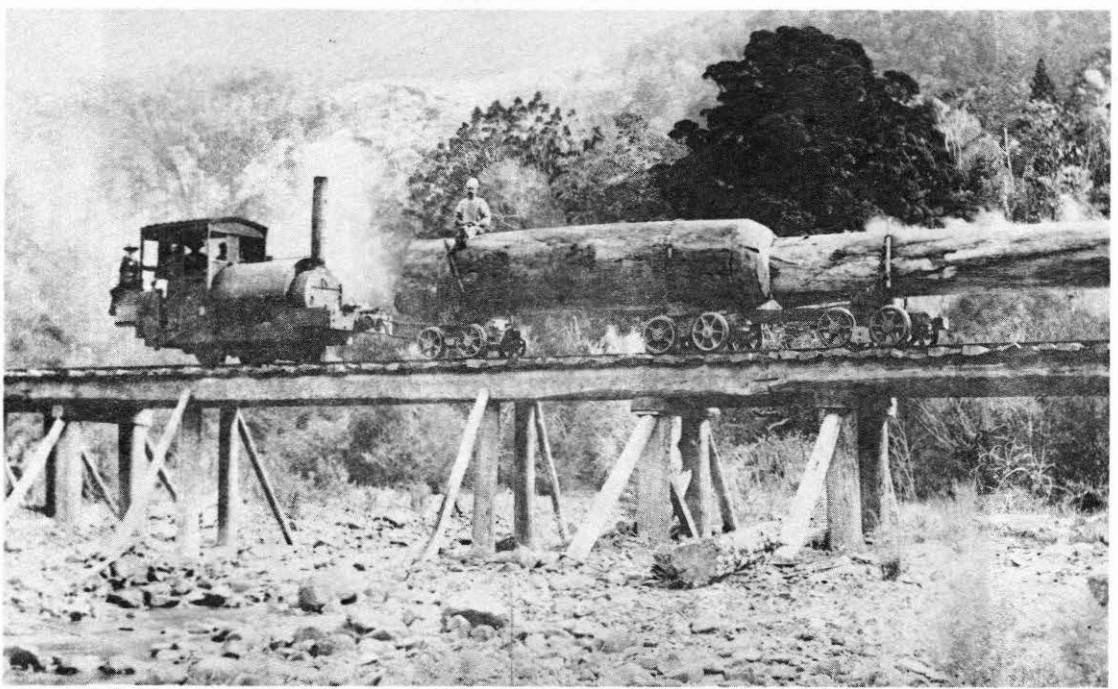
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KENNEDY BAY Plate 1. Reed's Pa on headland beyond undefended terraces.



KENNEDY BAY Plate 2. Smythe brothers settlement 1898.
(Auckland Institute and Museum Photograph).



KENNEDY BAY Plate 3. Smythe brothers bush locomotive.
(Auckland Institute and Museum photograph).



TARANAKI PETROGLYPHS Plate 1. N118/58, Rahotu.
(Taranaki Newspapers Photograph).