



NEW ZEALAND
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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT ONGARI POINT,
KATIKATI, BAY OF PLENTY.

A Report on the First Season of Excavations

by
Wilfred Shawcross.

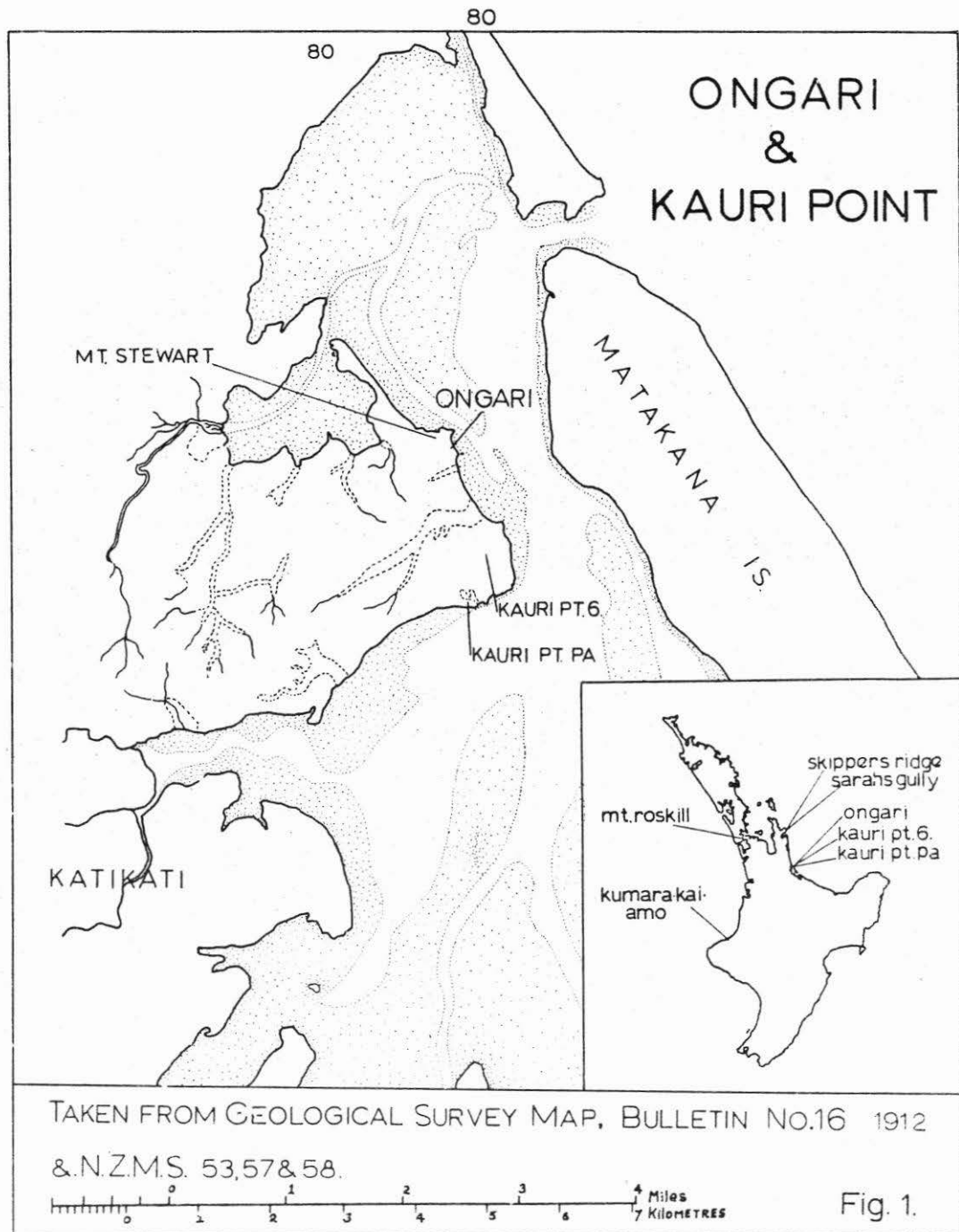
The Auckland University Archaeological Society has commenced a new series of excavations centred upon the fortified site at Ongari Point (N53-54/10), which is part of the Kauri Point Peninsula. Ongari is, in a direct line, under 1½ miles distant from the Kauri Point Pa, previously investigated by the Society under the direction of Mr. J. Golson and Mr. W. Ambrose successively. (Golson 1961:13. and Ambrose 1962:56.) The location of the site and its relation to those at Kauri Point is shown on the map (fig. 1), while a plan of the site is given in fig. 2.

REASONS FOR THE CHOICE OF THE SITE:

There are two reasons for choosing Ongari as the centre for further research. In the first place the Kauri Point area has already been the scene of very intensive study during the past four years and it is desirable that the results from this work should be developed and extended by working in the same area, rather than by moving to another area and commencing all over again. Secondly, there is good evidence that Ongari was being occupied up to the time of its abandonment in 1842. These two points will now be discussed in more detail.

Golson turned his attention to Kauri Point in 1960, when he was searching for a site which might provide evidence for the relationship between Archaic and Classic Maori culture. It was hoped that two kinds of evidence - adzes and earthworks - would in particular shed light upon this relationship. The Kauri Point area, among others, was thought likely to provide information on adzes, because it appeared to lie within the boundary of the areas of distribution of both Archaic and Classic forms (see distribution maps, figs. 13 & 14 in Golson 1959), while the same was in part true of earthworks, for the characteristic site of the Bay of Plenty is the ring ditch pa, whereas scarped and terraced sites are common further to the North, in the Coromandel area. (Golson 1961:13). It is not necessary at this point to discuss the results of Golson's researches - sufficient to say that the Kauri Point pa (N 53-54/5) was selected and underwent a more thorough and ambitious excavation than had any settlement in New Zealand up to that time.

While this research was being carried out, two groups of rock carvings were discovered by Mr. J. Schofield in the same locality (Ambrose 1961:49 and Schofield 1962:67) and, in addition, a brief report of fieldwork on Mayor Island, visible from Kauri Point, was given by Mr. H. Pos. (Pos 1961:46). During the following seasons the swamp site alongside Kauri Point Pa, containing a large number of organic artefacts, was excavated by the author (Shawcross 1962:51 and 1963:50) and a field survey of Kauri Point, accompanied by both the excavation of a complex of pits and analyses of shell middens was made by Dr. R. Green (Green 1963:143). While any one of these varied pieces of work is interesting and important in itself, it will be appreciated that their value is considerably increased by their association together. Thus the swamp site provides artefactual evidence which was missing from the Pa, and indicates the existence of a totally different kind of site or component. The apparently under-ended complex of pits



and the rock carvings may likewise be described as components, while the study of the contents of the middens not only provides evidence for the exploitation of the surrounding environment but also potential material for determining age. Finally, the description of Mayor Island brings that most important of obsidian sources into any discussion of the area.

However, a sequence of occupations from a single site plus a number of not always clearly related components is not by itself capable of giving a full account of the Prehistoric occupation of even the limited area of the peninsula, where there is visible evidence for at least seven other major centres of settlement. It therefore seemed necessary to investigate at least one of these other major settlements in order to evaluate how far the Kauri Point evidence was characteristic of the locality. This is a sound theoretical approach but contrasts strongly with normal archaeological practice, where the procedure appears to be to obtain a sequence at one site and assume that the evidence from this sequence will be found repeated, more or less, throughout the area surrounding that site. Several objections may be raised against this latter procedure. Firstly, the size and definition of the "area" is not absolute, being variable according to whether cartographic, ecological or other criteria are used. Secondly, there are strong grounds for supposing that occupations of sites in New Zealand were discontinuous. Thirdly and most important of all, there is as yet insufficient evidence for the range of variation which may be built into any contemporary group of structures. Finally, a cautious approach is necessary in a country such as this where the poor survival of portable artefacts in association with settlements, and the apparent ubiquitousness of other features, imposes limitations. On these grounds it was decided to continue work in the vicinity of the previous excavations.

The reason why Ongari, rather than any of the other major sites in the area, was selected is that there are records showing that the site was occupied as a fortified settlement in 1842, when it was attacked by a war party and subsequently abandoned and turned into a cultivation plot. In view of the fact that the occupation sequence from Kauri Point Pa was essentially a "floating" one - that is, there was no precise evidence for the date at which the site was first occupied or finally abandoned - it was felt necessary to make an attempt to correlate the two sites. At the same time the isolation of an occupation of c. 1842 would provide valuable material for the re-evaluation of the definitions of Prehistoric and Protohistoric Maori culture which are inherent in the writings of scholars such as Raymond Firth and Elsdon Best. (These definitions have recently been subjected to a critical examination by Mr. L. Groube, in his unpublished Master's Thesis).

While for purely Archaeological purposes it is probably sufficient to know that the site was occupied and abandoned in 1842; it is felt preferable here to describe the Historical evidence in more detail, both that it may itself be better evaluated and also because the account lends a certain colour to the site.

The Historical significance of the site was appreciated by the writer after his attention had been drawn to the letter book and journal of Edward Shortland, who visited the Thames and Bay of Plenty areas in December 1842, on behalf of George Clark Sr., the Protector of Aborigines. (The writer is indebted to his wife and to Mr. D. Simmons who were studying these manuscripts, housed in the Hocken Library). These are at present the only primary sources consulted, but they are to some extent amplified by a published account given by Thomson and shorter accounts by White, Smith and Cowan.

The course to be taken here will be to reconstruct the events at Kauri Point, mainly upon Shortland's accounts, which were written shortly after the events occurred and were directly concerned with their investigation.

During the earlier part of 1842 the Thames chief Taraia, of whom a portrait exists in Whites' "The Ancient History of the Maori", led a war party across the Kaimai Ranges to Ongari, where, in the early morning, he made an attack upon the Christian inhabitants of that Pa. Thomson quotes what must be an eyewitness account of this attack, describing how one of the occupants of the Pa rose early to smoke his pipe and, sensing something afoot, tried to warn his companions. But they ignored him, thinking that the sounds were only those of the sea washing against the foot of the cliffs. The error was discovered too late, for the fortifications were suddenly overwhelmed. As a result three chiefs, Te Whanake, Reko and Tautahanga were killed and the first two eaten, while a number of women and children were taken slaves, and guns and prayer books were taken away (Thomson 1859:53). An appeal for restitution from the Ongari Maoris to the recently formed British Government in New Zealand placed the Government in the position of having to take action against Taraia to uphold its own prestige. The Government, however, could think of no effective course to follow, the extent of its powerlessness being well illustrated by one "fatuous debate in the Legislative Council at Auckland... (where it was) actually suggested that the old warrior (Taraia) should be served with a summons by a constable at his fortified Pa". (Cowan 1922:4).

It is now necessary to look into the antecedents of this affair. The original grounds for Taraia's attack upon Whanake lay some two generations previously, when a chief named Rangitoto was living at Ongari or in its vicinity. Rangitoto was married to a daughter of Pukeko, who was probably Taraia's grandfather, while he was himself the ancestor of Tupaia, a contemporary of Whanake and of the same tribe, the Ngaiterangi. Pukeko was cast ashore at Kauri Point when his canoe foundered while passing up Tauranga Harbour and, as was apparently the custom under such circumstances, he was killed and eaten by his son-in-law. This created a rift between Rangitoto's tribe and that of his wife the Ngatitamatera. Inevitably war arose and it is recorded that three Pa were destroyed at Katikati before the Ngatitamatera took possession of the area and constructed a further two. (Shortland Letter book 1842.) Taraia's ancestors were now living and being buried at Ongari, but subsequently the peace of the area was further disturbed by the incursions of the Ngapuhi - twice under Te Morenga between 1818 and early 1820; again, under different leaders in 1823; and three or four more times between 1830 and 1832. It is interesting to find that at about this time Taraia and Whanake were fighting side by side. (Smith 1910.) Presumably as a result of these wars Taraia and his people left the Ongari area, though it still retained important associations for Taraia. In the meantime Whanake settled at Ongari and it is recorded that Taraia had no objection to this, so long as Whanake did not refortify the place. However, Whanake ignored this provision and built his Pa close to the spot where Taraia's relations were buried. (Shortland Letter books 1842-50) Furthermore, Thomson notes that Taraia received at this time "insulting letters from the Tauranga Natives". (Thomson 1859:53). It is impossible to say what these insults may have been, but one guess is that they were connected with the disturbances of the burials of Taraia's ancestors. At any rate, on the grounds of these wrongs, the one long standing and the others recent aggravations. Taraia led his attack upon Whanake.

The History of Ongari does not conclude with Taraia's return to the Thames, because a little while before Shortland's arrival a further "outrage" occurred there. After the abandonment of the settlement it had been turned into a potato cultivation and it was as such that it was visited by a small group of the Arawa tribe, including

Tongaroa and a boy who was the Ariki of the Arawa, and two Europeans (Charles and Peter) who owned the boat in which the party was travelling to Auckland. The Europeans suggested a plan to steal the potatoes planted at Ongari, and the Arawa, though at first demurring at this, knowing that the ground was sacred as the place of Whanake's death, agreed. While the party was busy lifting the potatoes it was surprised by a number of the survivors of Whanake's group, who had been watching from Matakana Island (see Map). The Arawa and the Europeans were caught at a disadvantage and they were stripped and their boat captured. The Maoris escaped into the bush, but the boy disappeared and was not heard of again. Afterwards the Arawa survivors, under Tongaroa, captured another European boat belonging to a James Farrer and returned in it to Maketu with the news of the loss of the boy. Inevitably this required utu and this was speedily taken. Tongaroa and a war party sailed out to Mayor Island in Farrer's boat, disguised as Europeans and fired upon several unsuspecting canoe loads of people who came out to meet them. Tongaroa then returned to Maketu with slaves and the bodies of some of the dead, which were subsequently eaten. (Shortland 1842: Journal) This piece of evidence, were there no other claimants, effectively disposes of White's caption "Last Cannibal" below his illustration of Taraiā.

Ongari now bid fair to become the centre of a considerable amount of bloodshed and a severe embarrassment to the new Government, but the trouble was contained by the hurried dispatch of troops to Tauranga and by negotiations so that all died away to nothing. Subsequently the Katikati block was confiscated after the Maori Wars and in 1874 10,000 acres were transferred to George Vesey Stewart, the founder of the Ulster Settlement at Katikati. (Gray 1938:14)

This leads to the investigation of the last structural evidence for occupation to concern the Archaeologist at Ongari Point. The structure is the house, Mount Stewart, built by Vesey Stewart within a hundred yards or so of the Western defences of Ongari Pa. Mount Stewart has been abandoned for many years and fallen into decay, but a plan was drawn in 1964 and is shown in fig. 2. The building is on a single floor and appears to consist of two basic houses (each resembling a "but and ben") joined together in a single L shaped structure, with what appear to have been the kitchens at the back or South West part. However, a discussion of this interesting building must be postponed. Some kind of continuity in the Maori and European occupation of this area can be seen in the discovery of a greenstone adze (fig. 9c) and two silver shillings with their milled edges battered and dated 1877, found by Mr. Mossop while digging the shell middens at the foot of the Pa for chicken grit. As a conclusion it can be noted that a tramway was built to carry Kauri logs down to the deep water at Ongari around the turn of the century and that a timber mill and camp were sited there before the second World War, also taking advantage of the deep water.

THE EXCAVATIONS

The aims of the excavations were to disclose a sequence of occupations and their associated structural evidence and to isolate the settlement of 1842. The site encloses a considerably greater area than the standing fortifications at Kauri Point and, on the basis of experience gained at that site, it was realized that these questions could not be answered within a single season.

From the plan (fig. 2) it will be seen that Ongari consists of three enclosures which lie at the seaward end of a level plateau, defined at either side by steep slopes. The easternmost enclosure appears now as the strongest and most completely defended area with a double bank and ditch round its two level sides. The westernmost enclosure has only its southern face defended by a double ditch and bank; its other face on level

MOUNT STEWART

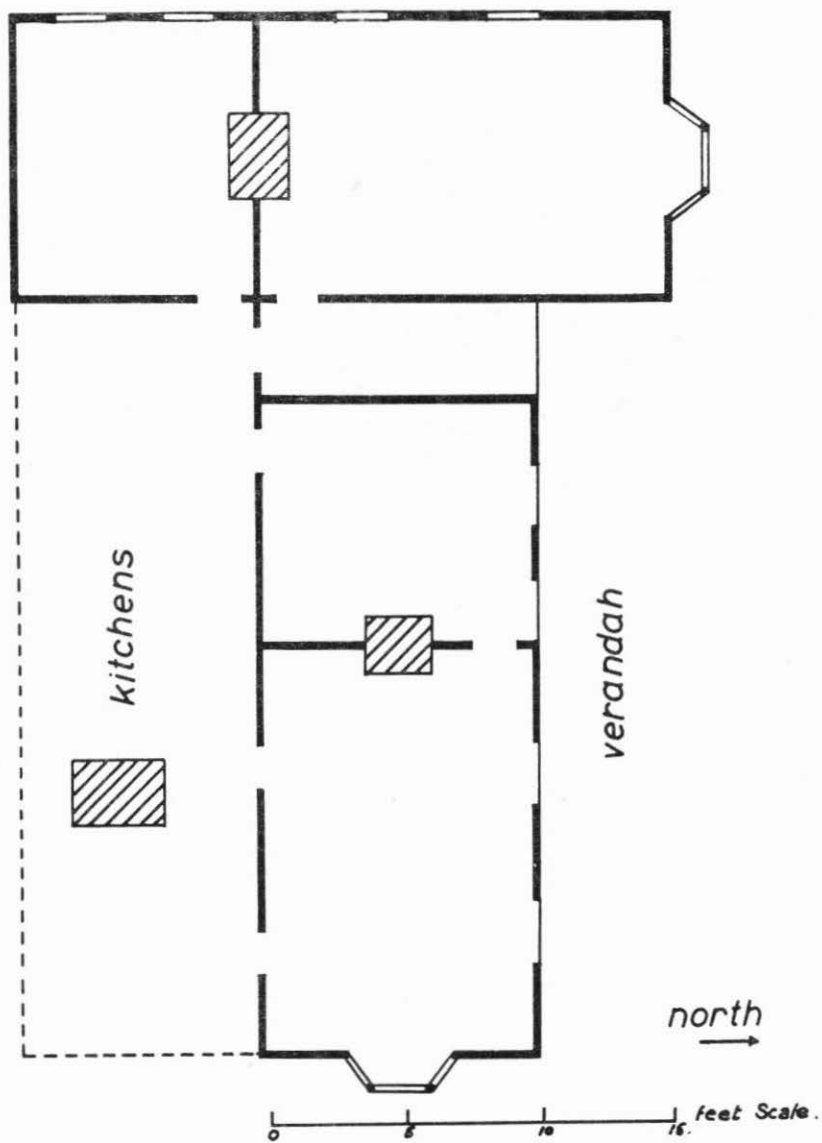


Fig. 2

ground has a single bank and ditch and these structures give the impression of hasty or incomplete construction. The central enclosure consists now only of a single ditch with a low inner bank along the level face.

It has been shown at Kauri Point that the earlier defensive area was considerably larger than the final Pa. It was thus decided to concentrate upon the most complete eastern enclosure on the assumption that Ongari would show a reduction in area and doubling in defences similar to that demonstrated at Kauri Point (Ambrose 1962:64). Given the limits of available labour, experience also indicated that the best tactics would be firstly, to take a section through the defences, for this would most economically provide evidence for the reconstruction of defences, and secondly, to conduct an area excavation within the defended area. This plan was followed and only modified by developing a second area excavation within the central enclosure and by the fact that the defence section could not be completed owing to the unexpected complexity of features under the outer bank.

The Laying out of the Excavations

The first procedure was to create a datum line along the longest axis of the site and construct a grid system of ten foot squares upon this. Within the grid, squares of eight feet were excavated, leaving baulks two feet wide between the excavations. This is the procedure advocated by Wheeler and it is ideally suited to large scale excavations where there are superimposed deposits of some depth. All drawings were made to a scale of one twelfth natural size and a convention was devised and employed in making the plans whereby vertical faces were shown in perspective, converging upon a point in the centre of each square at the rate of $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches representing one foot in depth. This system leads to an increase in the clarity of the drawings and ease in their interpretation due to the effect of solidity. However, this will be to some extent lost in the small scale reproductions of the Newsletter.

THE STRUCTURES AND OCCUPATION SEQUENCE

Seven classes of structural evidence were encountered at Ongari. The first consists of ditches - either partially filled as the result of natural processes of sedimentation or entirely filled by man. In most cases these ditches were both sufficiently deep and wide and located in such a position as to suggest a defensive purpose. But in one case there is a relatively shallow and narrow one with low battered sides which may have served as a drain. It is shown in fig. 6, running from South to North, through squares G and H 27. Should it be a ditch it would discharge out onto the cliff on the northern face of the site.

The second class is the bank. Banks appear to have been constructed from spoil won from the digging of the ditches and, on the evidence of the section (fig. 7a.), have had their size increased by the addition of a core of shells. Owing to the nature of banks there are no survivals from early periods of fortification, for they have been subsequently levelled.

In association with the banks is a third class of structure - deep pits providing footings for heavy palisade posts (fig. 5 Square H.20). It is reasonable to interpret these as evidence for former banks, though not giving their precise locations.

The fourth class of structure is the fire pit - numerically very well represented at Ongari. The largest, a single partially excavated example, is about eight feet in diameter and some two feet deep. It is numbered VIII and lies in

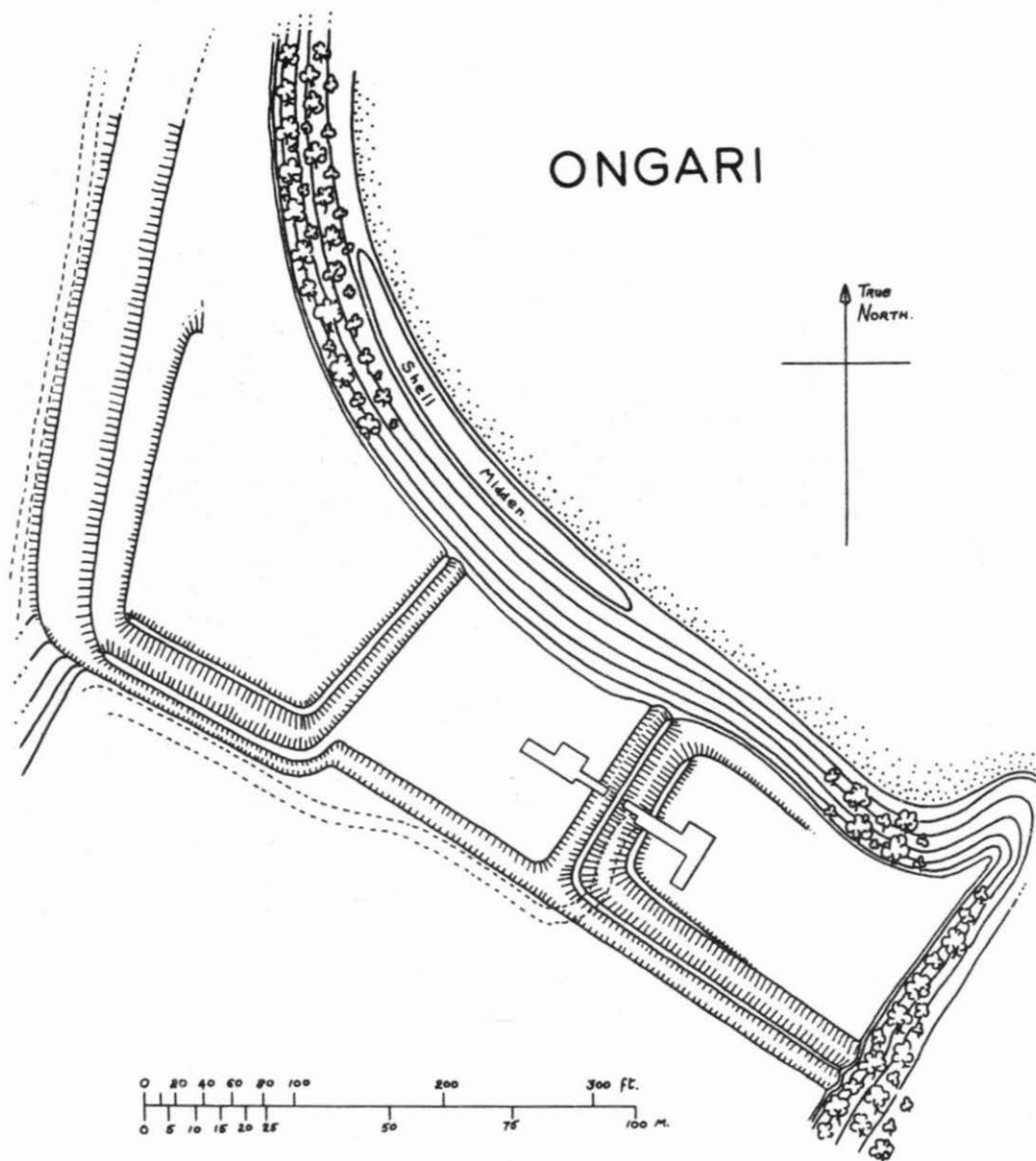


Fig.3

squares H.16 and 17 (fig. 5). It appears to have been bowl shaped and its surviving edges show signs of intense heating. Intermediate in size are some ten or more roughly circular pits, about two to three feet in diameter and a foot deep, made out of "fill" and having raised rims. These are concentrated up against the bank in squares H.19 and 20 and are superimposed upon each other, with large quantities of ashes, burnt shell and firestones, as if the area was devoted to cooking over a length of time (fig. 4). Another form, of which there are two examples, is a shallow circular hearth, about 1½ feet in diameter and an inch or so deep, containing fine ashes and lying in the floors of pits X and XXIII. The existence of such hearths has led Golson to suggest that some rectangular pits were used as houses. (Golson 1961:21) Lastly, widely scattered throughout the site are small, irregularly shaped hollows containing patches of ashes. Whether these represent hearths within houses or evidence for cooking or just small dumps of ashes is not clear, because they lie on the surface of the occupation deposits and have been disturbed by agriculture.

The fifth class of structure, the posthole, is present in large numbers as will be seen from the plan (fig. 4). The majority are between three and six inches in diameter, while the largest are about nine inches. There are also a number of rectangular postholes, about eight by four inches. It is difficult to say whether these dimensions are those of the timbers buried in the holes or the diameter of the original hole when dug. Few were half sectioned because this procedure would have disturbed the cultural deposits into which the postholes had been cut. Similarly, it has so far proved impossible to ascertain the kinds of structure of which the posts formed part. As will be seen in fig. 4, the postholes do not fall into recognizable forms of alignment, though some are clearly found in rows. The conclusion which must be drawn is that there were timber framed buildings or possibly store-houses resting upon piles and that a considerable amount of replacement and alteration took place in these timber framed structures. The implication for future work is that much more attention will have to be paid to the distribution of the postholes and this will require the exposure of larger areas than has hitherto been the case.

The rectangular pits, shown in figures 6 and 7 and given Roman numerals, form the sixth class. So far twenty nine pits have been discovered within an area of 1500 square feet, a fact which indicates a higher density of pits than in any other site so far excavated. This may be roughly expressed as an estimated one pit per fifty square feet, as against one per one hundred and thirty for the Kauri Point Pa and site N53-54/6. Few of the pits have as yet been entirely excavated so that no tables of their dimensions can be presented; but the majority appear to be between four and five feet broad and about twice that length. Standing far outside these dimensions is pit XVII, running through squares H.19, 20 and 21. This is about three feet broad by thirty feet in length.

As will be seen from figures 5 and 6 the density of the pits has resulted in extensive superimposition of the plans of later ones cut into the fills of their predecessors, and this has left a relatively small amount of undisturbed subsoil. Insofar as it makes possible the determination of the order in which the pits were originally dug this superimposition is useful to the Archaeologist; but, on the other hand, such complexity makes excavation and interpretation extremely difficult. Furthermore the prehistoric disturbance of the subsoil has been so great that at no point does the original ground surface stand from before the first occupation of Ongari.

A characteristic feature of the pits is that they fall into distinguishable alignments, with the majority having their long axes facing North-East by South-West, but with two groups having a North-West by South-East alignment, almost at right angles

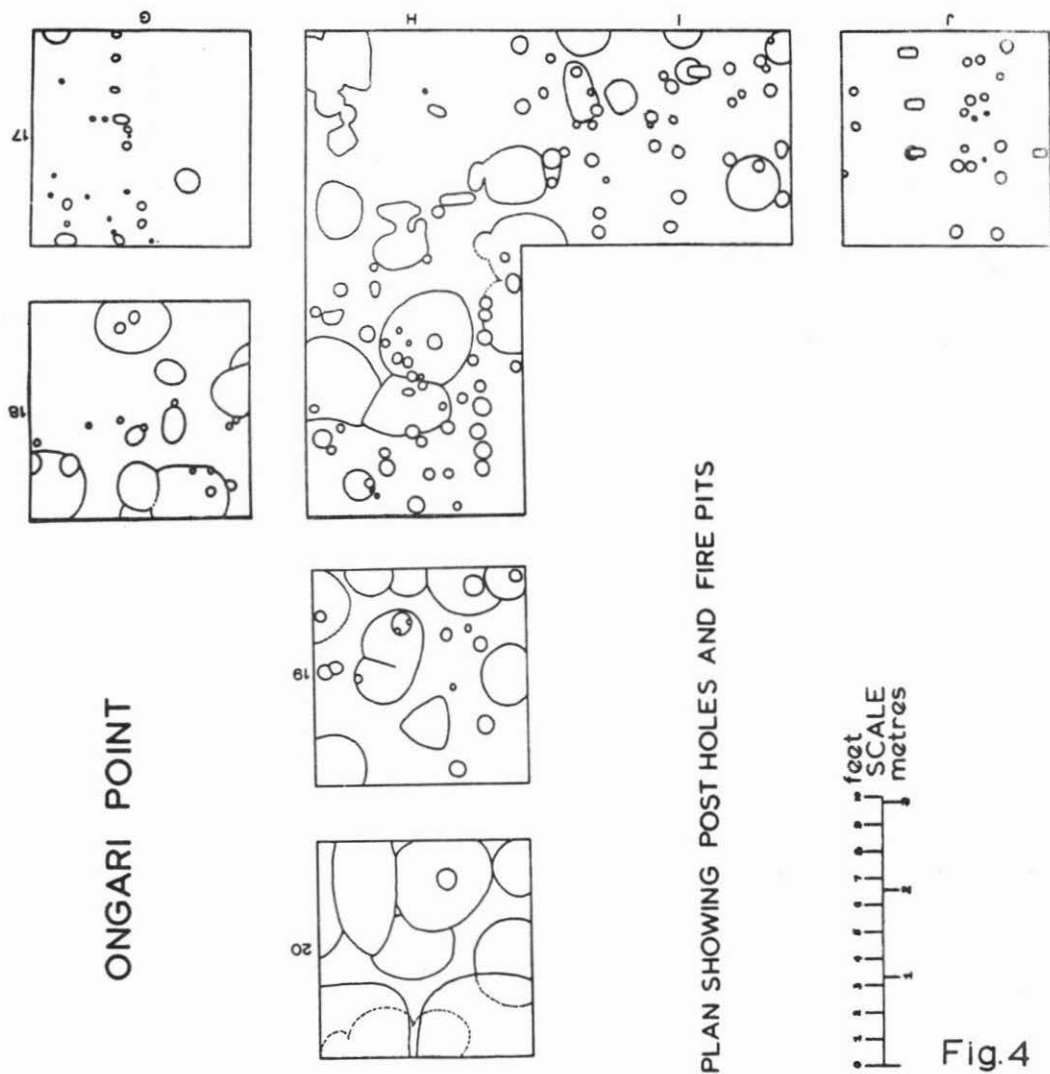


Fig.4

to the others. At two sites - Skippers Ridge and Kumara Kaiamo - pits have been observed to have been formed in pairs and in rows (Parker 1962:223). This regularity is not so obvious at Ongari but some pits seem clearly to be in pairs, consisting, in the case of XI and XIII, of a larger pit and a satellite. The patterns of the post-holes in the pit floors appear to have no standardized arrangement while the presence of hearths, if they may be called such, is, as already noted, rare. One pit, XI, was found to have remarkable vertically corrugated walls. These corrugations, about one and half inches broad by a third deep, were extremely regular and appeared to have been made by a digging stick, though the possibility that they resulted more from moulding should be taken into account. The purpose of the corrugations is obscure - they seem too regular to be solely the byproduct of the excavation of the pit, but whether they were decorative or had some other function cannot be shown.

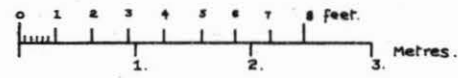
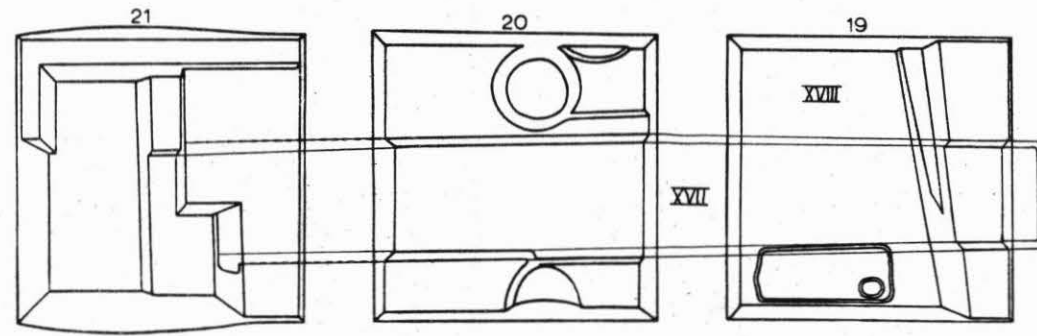
The final class of structure is constituted by a single, oval underground pit, No. XII. It is entered from the side by a circular opening at the foot of a narrow, vertical square shaft. The dimensions of the underground part are seven by four feet, while the highest point of its domed roof is about three feet above the floor. While not identical to the underground pits described by Parker at Skippers Ridge and Kumara Kaiamo and by Green at site N53-54/6, it bears a close resemblance to these. (Parker 1962:224 and Green 1963:161). Elsdon Best, in describing a wide range of pits used for the storage of crops, refers to a well-like or bell-shaped form, entered through a narrow hole in the roof and also to another form, bell-shaped too, but dug horizontally into the scarps of ditches and terraces. (Best 1925:119) and (Best 1927:151). However, pit XII and those described by Parker and Green seem to combine features of both, the entrance shaft being a level ground substitute for a scarp.

THE OCCUPATION SEQUENCE

The Historical evidence for Ongari suggested that there had been a number of occupations prior to that of 1842, while the Archaeological evidence from Kauri Point indicated that a single site might show evidence for as many as five periods of occupation and this potential complexity is increased by the evidence for seven phases from Kumara Kaiamo. Therefore the aim of the excavation was to identify and isolate, as far as possible, each occupation. Three forms of evidence were available for this:- (i) the separation of occupations by strata; (ii) the separation of the order in which pits of all forms have been dug, filled and then cut into by subsequent pits; (iii) the separation of structures by their alignments. (i) and (ii) may be described as stratigraphy, though (ii) cannot always be related to strata in the normally understood sense of layers. (iii) is the least satisfactory form of evidence and is only used as a last resort, for it is based upon an assumption that the structures of an occupation were intentionally built according to particular alignments and that these alignments may be distinguished. There is good evidence to suggest that this was not always the case but the method has been cautiously applied at Ongari, where it can be checked by two other methods, whose results may be more positively demonstrated. As far as the alignments have been used at Ongari they have been consistent with the stratigraphic evidence - that is, at present there are no certain instances where stratigraphy and alignment disagree, but this would be no justification for substituting interpretation based on alignment of structures for the more exacting stratigraphic interpretation.

The earliest phase of occupation at Ongari is represented by pits IX, XVI and XVII, which are aligned North-West by South-East. Of these an adequate plan of only one, the already noted abnormal pit XVII, can be obtained. In addition, it is possible that an early defensive ditch, only partially sectioned and lying under the outer bank (see section, fig. 7a) belongs to this phase.

ONGARI POINT



PLAN SHOWING PITS

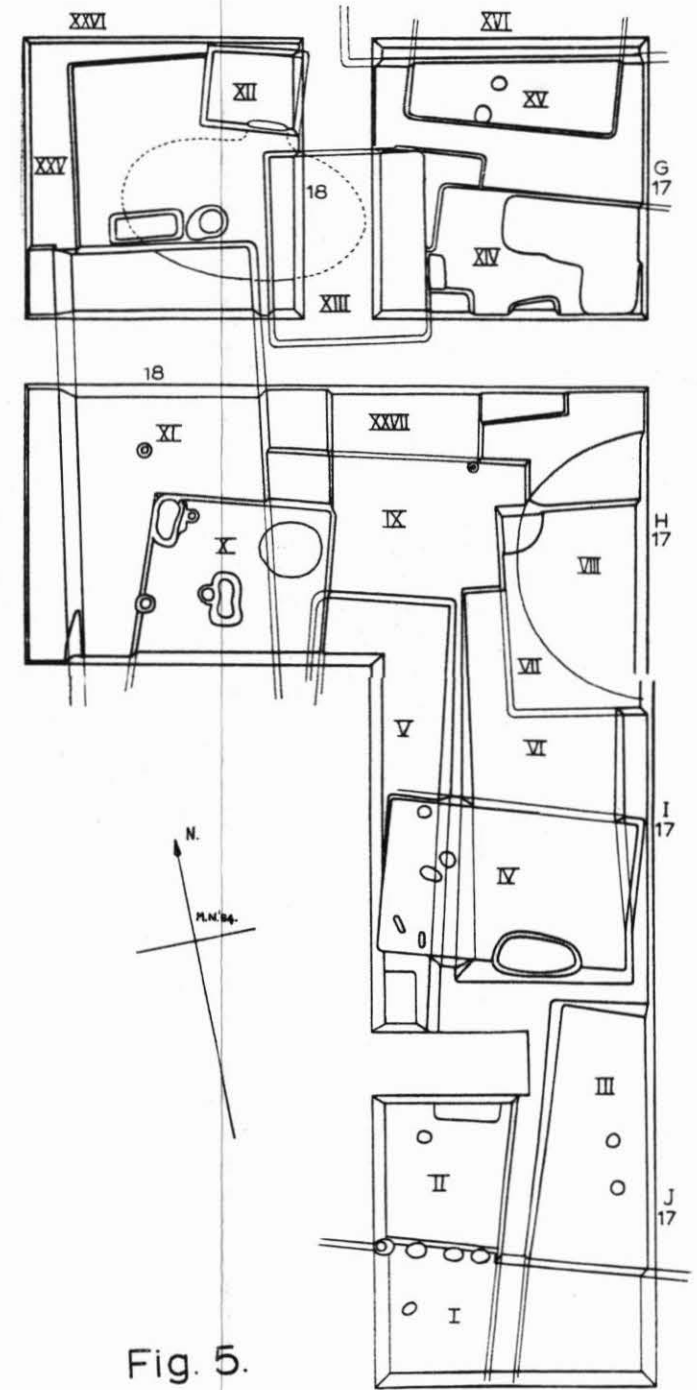


Fig. 5.

ONGARI POINT

SCALE

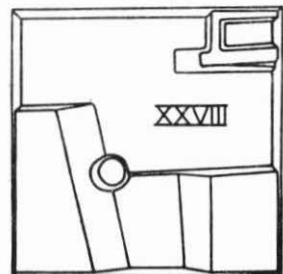
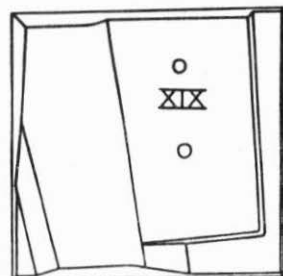
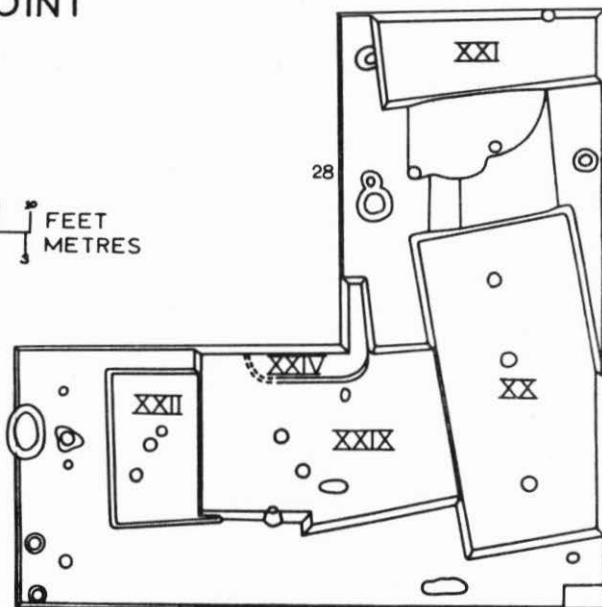
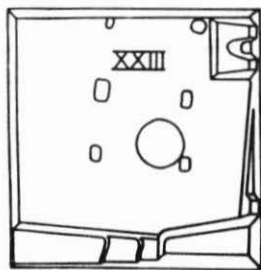
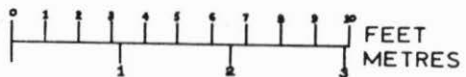


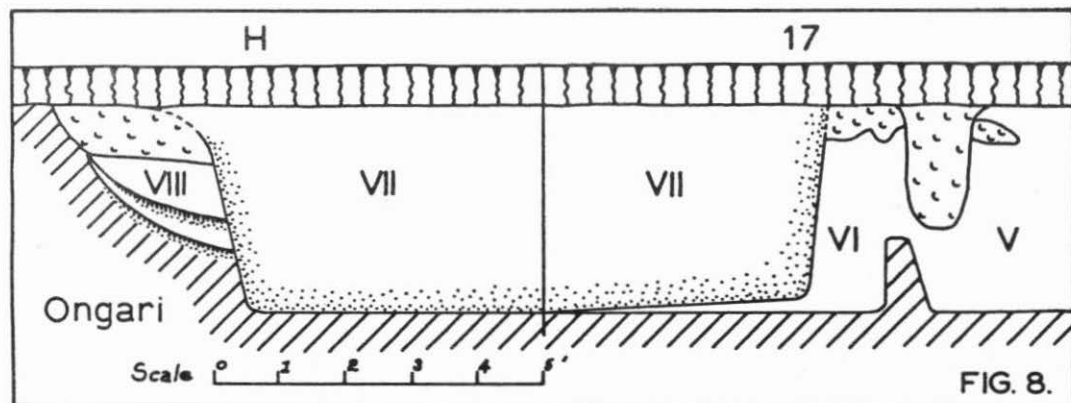
Fig 6

PLAN SHOWING PITS

The second phase is represented by a far greater number of pits, aligned North-East by South-West, and including the interesting, underground pit. This group consists of pits II, III, V, VI and X (cut into V), and also XII, XV and XXVII.

The third phase discloses a rather more open plan also aligned North-East by South-West. The pits which belong to this phase are XI and its satellite XIII and also the large fire pit VIII. Another feature which may be provisionally assigned to this phase is structure XVIII, which, while appearing to be a pit, has features which suggests that it was in fact a defensive ditch.

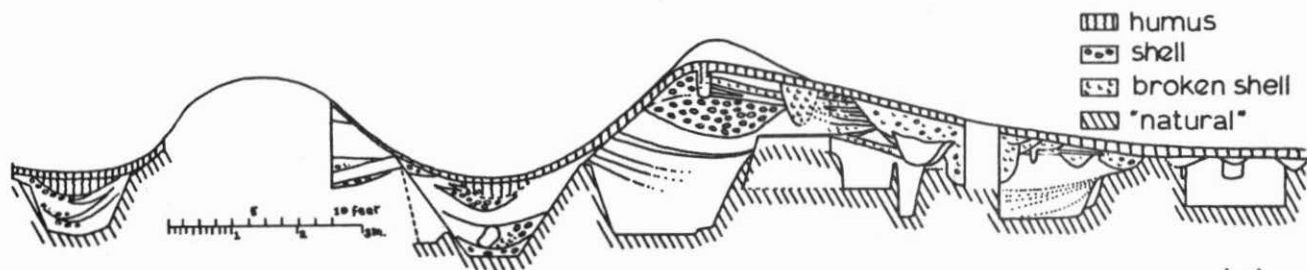
The fourth phase is represented by pits once more in a North-West by South-East alignment and consists of pits I, IV, VII and XIV. At this point the stratigraphic relationship between pit VII, the fire pit VIII from the preceding phase, and its predecessor, pit VI, may be demonstrated in the section (fig. 8)



The fifth phase of occupation may, in fact, fall into two parts. It is represented by the construction of the double bank and ditch system which now stands and by the very extensive deposits of occupation debris, the majority of fire pits and timber structures. The defensive system has been cut into and imposed upon structures of the previous four phases. The site appears to have been entirely levelled at this time and no pits have been found in association with it. On the other hand there are numerous fire pits, as previously mentioned, lying in the lee of the bank (fig. 4) and seen in the section (fig. 7a). Contemporary with these fire pits are the postholes (also shown on fig. 4), which were dug into the surface of the levelled area and indicate the presence of timber structures. While there is no evidence for a break in the occupation it was of sufficient length to leave extensive evidence for cooking and for reconstruction of buildings.

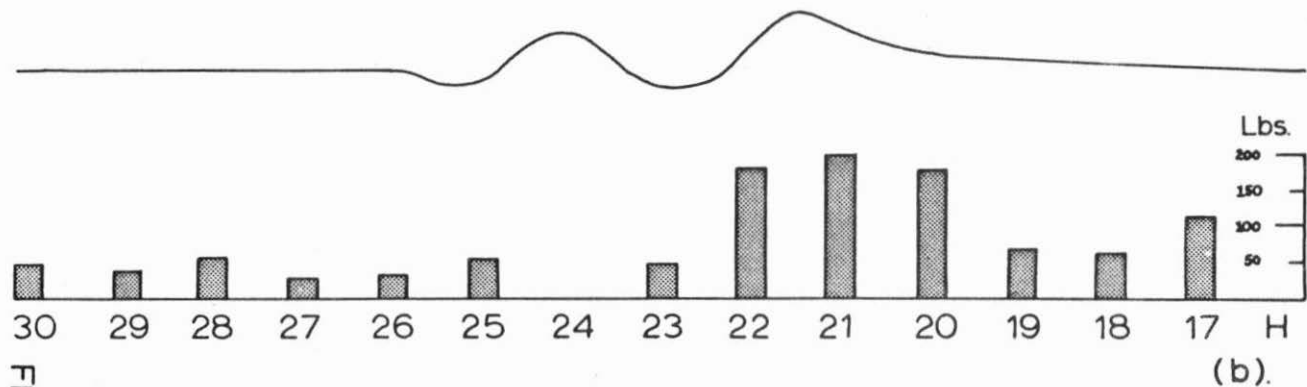
As a conclusion to this section it may be said that there is a clearly marked change in the character of the occupations between phases four and five.

ONGARI POINT



(a).

93



(b).

Fig. 7

PORTABLE ARTEFACTS AND ANIMAL REMAINS

Only a very small number of portable artefacts were found during the excavations and none of these were in primary association - this is they were found among the infilling of pits etc., and not in a situation which would lead to the conclusion that they had any significant connection with the place where they were discovered. Those artefacts found included a small highly-polished adze (fig. 9a), in square G.27 in the disturbed soil above the occupation deposits, and also in the same square the pumice dish (fig. 9d) which came from the fill of pit XIX. Three varied examples of an ambiguous form of artefact, one of which is shown in fig. 9b, were discovered. Archaeologists have classified such objects as sinkers or phalluses but whatever their function or functions they appear to be so universal that they can be of little archaeological value at present.

There were also some 160 flakes of obsidian distributed throughout the site. Their maximum density appears to be about 2.4 per square foot, compared with 276 per square foot at the Kauri Point Swamp.

Fire-stones were collected from each square and weighed. A Diagram (fig. 7b) has been prepared to show their weight along the profile of the squares in row H. The only compensations made in this diagram are the doubling of the weight of stone from the half squares. It is apparent that the weight of stones per square is fairly uniform except in the case of the square with the large fire-pit VIII and the cooking area and bank. This latter may reflect the possibility of the bank being built up of spoil taken from a previous cooking area.

The faunal evidence has not so far been studied and only a few general observations will be advanced here. There is a large shell midden at the foot of the cliffs upon which the site stands and there have been others in the past surrounding the site on the plateau and spilling down its north-western face. However, these have been extensively quarried for various purposes during the past ninety years, but sufficient remains of many for them to be relocated upon aerial photographs. Within the site the largest deposit of shells is found as a core to the inner bank, where they are almost certainly secondarily deposited. Elsewhere there are small deposits, particularly in some of the postholes where is often concentrated a single species of animal. One interesting collection consisted of a large number of cockles that had been dumped, unopened, into the fill of a pit. All the vertebrate remains so far recovered are in secondary deposits: they appear to include a few widely dispersed human bones and quite numerous remains of rats. Some of the rat remains consisted of almost completely articulated skeletons, indicating that whole carcasses had become incorporated in the process of pit filling.

DISCUSSION

It is reasonable to conclude that the latest occupation, represented by phase five, is that referred to in the historical accounts. On the other hand, the area excavated is only a small fraction of the total, and the western area, in particular, has not yet been studied at all. In view of the apparent incompleteness of the fortifications of that area and the absence of any artefacts suggesting European contacts in the eastern area, it seems advisable to withhold identifying this occupation with that of Whanake.

While a preliminary report is clearly not the place for conclusions, there is already sufficient evidence for evaluation and comparison with other excavations. Of primary interest is the interpretation to be placed upon assemblages of pits and for this question the starting point is the proposal made by Parker that two parallel

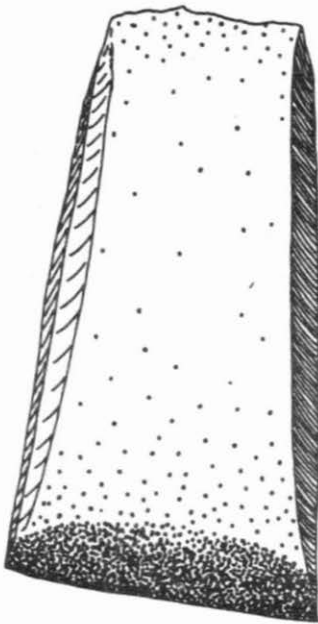
ONGARI



(a).



(b).



(c)



(d)

Fig. 9

streams -- called by him Archaic A and Archaic B -- may be distinguished. Archaic A is characterised by rectangular pits with "buttresses" in their walls, associated with underground store-pits. Archaic B possesses plain rectangular pits and relatively smaller "bin-pits". The evidence suggests that both A and B were the products of people sharing the common assemblage of Archaic, Eastern Polynesian artefacts, but whose earthwork structures were mutually exclusive (Parker 1962:224).

This distinction between Archaic A and B has been demonstrated at the two widely separated sites of Kumara Kaiamo and Skippers Ridge, while the presence of a buttressed pit early in an occupation sequence has been suggested by the author for a third and equally distant site of Mt. Roskill (Shawcross 1962:81) (for location of these sites see inset to fig. 1). However, the preliminary reports on Kauri Point do not support the separate identities of Archaic A and B assemblages for in period 2 there are rectangular pits, some with buttresses and these are apparently associated with "bin-pits" (Golson 1961:21), while at Kauri Point N53-54/6 there are rectangular pits, without buttresses but associated with underground pits, (Green 1963:151) a pattern which is repeated in phase 2 at Ongari. Thus the Kauri Point Peninsula provides two different combinations, but both distinct from the arrangements proposed by Parker. Such a conclusion, so far from invalidating study based upon pits, rather serves to emphasize the need for considerably more work upon a problem whose existence was virtually unknown four years ago.

On the other hand, a feature which now appears to be occurring with some regularity in the excavation of pa sites is a changeover in the characteristics of occupation. In the early phases at Kauri Point, Kumara Kaiamo, Sarah's Gully Pa (Birks 1960:19) and now Ongari, the rectangular pit, in a variety of forms, is predominant, whereas in the later phases postholes cut into a levelled surface occur in large numbers within the defences. It is reasonable to suggest, though as yet impossible to demonstrate, that at Kumara Kaiamo and Ongari, at least, this occurred during the nineteenth century. If this is the case there may well have been a striking and general architectural change going on within pa sites. If pits, or at least some pits, as suggested by Golson (Golson 1961:21) were houses, the change would be from underground houses, within the defended area, to above ground houses. But, if pits were used for storage as, it appears, was Elsdon Best's assumption, and as has recently been re-examined by Groube there is an even more distinctive change from relatively limited and transient evidence for dwellings, associated with extensive underground food storage and within the area of the defences, to a far more intensive and permanent form of settlement, as is shown by the density of postholes, indicating timber framed houses, and cooking area debris at Ongari and by Shortlands reference to the community living within the pa. Which interpretation of pits best fits the Ongari evidence is still an open question, particularly as it seems possible that the excavations have so far only uncovered specialized areas which may have shifted to different parts of the sites in different occupation phases.

One final point: the Historical account indicates that Ongari was turned into a cultivation area after its abandonment. If this practice was general it may contain the explanation for earlier fortifications being levelled and pits being filled. This would be a logical procedure if, as is possible, the human occupation reintroduced some vital source of fertility into the soil.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Mr. and Mrs. G. Mountain for their warm hospitality at Ongari and for their making available facilities which made even the longest spell of camp life a pleasure. I would like to thank Mr. R. Mossop, who accomplished in a day the refilling of the excavations, which would have taken us many laborious and valuable working days had we done it ourselves. I would also like to thank Mr. C.A. Moore and all those others from the neighbourhood who are now too numerous to name, for their interest in our work. Finally, I wish to express gratitude to all those members of our society who helped in the organization and excavation.

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A COASTAL SECTION BELOW THE PA SITE AT ONGARE POINT

by J.C. Schofield.

Mr. F.W. Shawcross, Anthropology Dept. University of Auckland drew my attention to the following section during the Easter Holidays. He thought there may be some evidence for past sea-level change. Although the exposures were not suitable for such evidence better exposures might be had as quarrying for shell grit continues. The following is a rather hurried description of the section as exposed 30/3/64.

Layer 1 (Top) (1' plus) midden with clayey matrix. Contact 1/2 sharp irregular.

Layer 2 (6') Mixed lumps of "clays" derived from old soils and from man-associated 'clay-glomerates' - individual fragments up to 1' plus. Lenses of midden are present - type A with clay matrix and appears disturbed; type B has charcoal, is free of matrix and is not disturbed. Contact 2/3 sharp and irregular.

Layer 3 (1" - 4") Grey midden with much burnt broken shell. No clay matrix. Contact 3/4 sharp and almost horizontal. Dug through at one place by shallow pan-like pit filled with layer 3.

Layer 4 (0 - 2") fine clay-glomerate. Contact 4/5 sharp regular.

Layer 5 (0 - 4") compare 3 Contact 5/6 sharp regular.

Layer 6 (0 - 2") a five-foot long lens of brown-grey clay with fine horizontal bedding, rare charcoal fragments and worm casts. Contact 6/7 sharp and almost horizontal.

Layer 7 (5" - 9") sandy midden with much broken shell, lenses of whole shell, clay fragments, charcoal common, grey pumice pebbles at base. Contact 7/8 sharp horizontal.

Layer 8 (1'9") "midden" or storm-ridge of clean whole shell, no matrix, charcoal moderately common. Contact 8/9 sharp and horizontal.

Layer 9 (1'3" plus) Mainly broken shell with sandy matrix. Probably beach. Top about 1' above high tide level.

Notes

None of the contacts showed any evidence of great time intervals between deposition of the layers. The material of layer 2 may have been deliberately dumped in place - certainly the middens of type B were placed in this manner without any further transportation - or the bulk of the material may have slid down the steep slope on the ocean side of the Pa, being deliberately thrown there by the Maories; or perhaps this