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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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BARTONS HILL PA, MAUNGATUROTO

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Bartons Hill is situated 2 km north-west of Maungaturoto railway station, on State Highway 12 in Northland (NZMS260 map Q08 (Maungaturoto) 286641). It is marked by an unbeaconed trig at a height of 145 m. From the summit there is a commanding 360° view of the surrounding country-side. The southern slopes, below the fortified area, are bush covered, partially restricting the view to the south from the lower terraces.

Water is freely available in the surrounding valleys and there is evidence of at least two springs to the south, immediately adjacent to the fortified area.

From the summit possible garden areas on the north facing slopes below the pa are visible. The eastern edge of the site drops away very steeply forming strong natural defences (Fig. 2) while the other sides slope more gently.

To the south-west of the fortified area, there is a ridge running for several hundred metres to the valley below. This ridge has a very steep southern edge but a more gently sloping northern side. A few metres below the southern earthworks of the fortified area shown in Figure 1, at the top of this ridge, there is a row of well-preserved pits, 16 in all, running down the crest of the ridge (Fig. 3). These are all in bush now, with trees of approximately 40 - 50 cm in girth, which are also growing in the pits, indicating that they are more recent than the habitation of the site. The bush consists mainly of broad-leaf podocarps, nikau, pongas and vines. There are a few larger totara trees of 1-2 m diameter.

Fieldwork

The pa was first measured in August 1983, using a tape and compass and a dumpy level for the cross section. In May 1984 with Jean's husband and son we surveyed the pa and accompanying pit complex. The purpose was:

1. to remeasure and reinterpret the features of the pa,
2. to measure the pit complex and relate that to the pa, and
3. to relate Bartons Hill to the wider settlement pattern of the area.

Description

The pa itself consists of about ten levels of terracing with several small steeply separated terraces to the north-east and two long terraces to the south-west, these latter terraces being separated from each other by a very slight change in level and largely surrounded by a bank about one metre in height. Beneath this bank is a sharp drop to another level which has also a partial bank on the outer edge. Despite considerable erosion, evidence remains that this was once a ditch surrounding the pa, probably on all sides except the very steep eastern corner.

Within the fortifications are at least five pits - two large, each on its own small terrace at the northern end, and one large, long pit at the southern end of the lower of the two long terraces. There were at least two small pits against the back scarps of the north-west terraces.

There seems to be considerable erosion damage, probably due to water run-off and stock disturbance. The trig point on top and electric fence running across the two long terraces do not seem to have caused much additional site disturbance. The terrain is too steep for wheeled vehicle access.

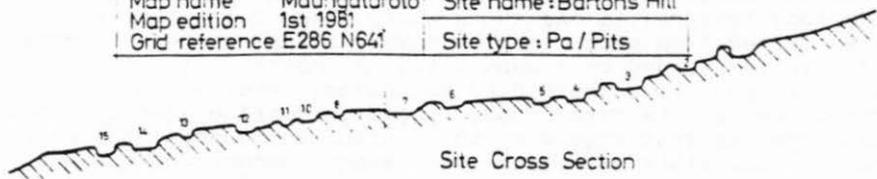
Pits run down a long bush-clad ridge that curves from a west-south-west to a west-north-west aspect. Despite the trees, the pits are very clearly defined, as they have not been filled in (see Fig. 3). There is little or no undergrowth, probably because of stock, possibly goats, in the area. There are traces of terraces further down, especially on the north side of the ridge. Nothing could be definitely identified, however, partly because of tree cover and partly because of erosion.

The pits themselves appear not to be badly eroded and most have a humus mixture in the bottom, though one was partially filled with clay, probably from water run-off. Pits 1-3 (see Fig. 1) seem to have been formed by a combination of digging into the natural slope on the eastern side and banking up the soil on the western side. Pits 10 and 11 are on what seems to be a made terrace. There is evidence of water erosion and stock activity.

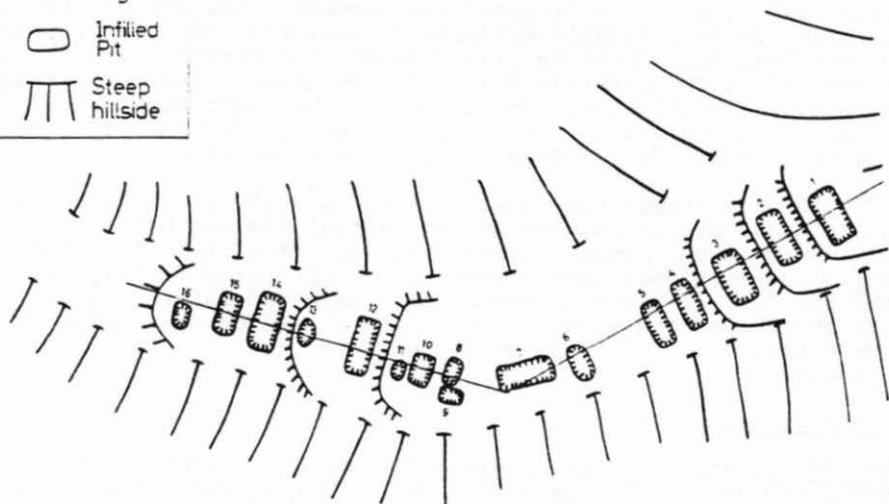
Interpretation

The fortifications. The pa seems to have been almost completely surrounded by a double ditch and bank - subsequent erosion would appear to be extensive. It is possible, however, that on the eastern side where the drop is sheer from the tihi down, that there was never more than perhaps a single bank. From the surface appearance, both on the ground and in the cross section (see Fig. 1)

SITE DESCRIPTION		Site number
Map number	Q08	
Map name	Maungaturoto	Site name : Bartons Hill
Map edition	1st 1981	
Grid reference	E286 N641	Site type : Pa / Pits



KEY	
	Fence
	Pit
	Terraces
	Bank
	Scarp
	Trig
	Infilled Pit
	Steep hillside



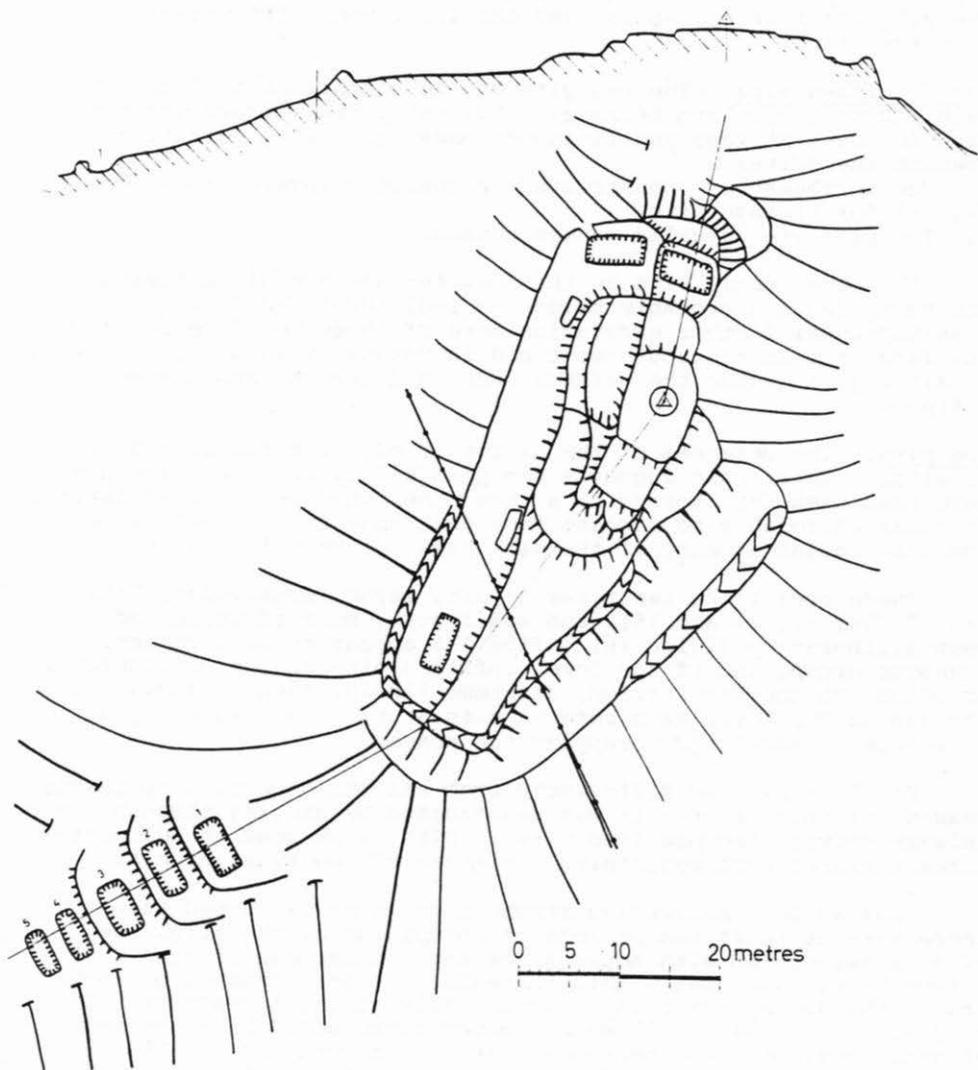


FIGURE 1. Plan and cross-section of Bartons Hill pa.

it looks as if the fortifying banks were built up rather than the area behind them being hollowed out. Probably the upper bank was created from earth excavated in the construction of the tihi and terraces above, and the lower bank with material from the ditch.

The fortified area. The two pits at the northern end of the pa each occupy a complete terrace. Evidently the terrace was not used for both storage and living at once, and two alternatives present themselves:

1. The terraces were constructed as dwelling levels and later dug out for storage pits.
2. The pits are actually sunken houses.

The other small pits on the long terrace are sited towards the back edge and probably belong to individual dwellings. Possibly under further excavation more of these would be found. The large pit at the south-west end is unusually long and narrow, is sited just inside the defence bank, and has the appearance of a trench.

The pits. The defences of the pa cut it off from the main body of pits. This again suggests the possibility that the site may have been used for storage at a time other than as a fortification. It seems reasonable to suggest from this that the storage use was the more recent as many of the pits have not been filled in.

There seem to be two types of pit, large rectangular (Pits 1-5, 7, 10, 12, 14 and 15), and small oval, most of which had been deliberately filled in. Pits 1-5 appear to be a contemporaneous group, and if the lower infilled pits can be considered to belong to the same period, as seems likely, then it seems that the gap on the level area between pits 5 and 6 was caused by a structure of some kind occupying the space.

Pit 7 is aligned differently from all the others, a suggested reason for this is that it was constructed by digging through the bulwark between two previous pits. Pits 11-16 seem to belong to three terraces each containing a mixture of two types of pit.

From surface evidence a strong impression is gained that there were at least two periods of occupation of the site, one of pits associated with house sites and a later one of more intensive storage use. This impression is strengthened by looking at the accompanying map, particularly at the lower pits. If Pits 7, 10, 12, 14 and 15 were removed there would be a pattern of small oval pits and terraces that fit in with Fox's (1983) suggested ratio of pits and house sites. It is difficult to relate the pit complex to the fortified area, more so because of the different subsequent land use of the two areas.



FIGURE 2. The steep eastern side of Bartons Hill.



FIGURE 3. View north-east up spur with pits.

Other features. Because of erosion it was not possible to identify entrances or pathways. No postholes were found, nor any surface evidence of middens, hearths or other specialisation areas.

The setting

Site recording in the wider Maungaturoto area is incomplete and no particular pattern could be assigned to the sites recorded on the NZMS260 Maungaturoto map. Maungatoroto is at the landward end of a tongue of land between the Arapaoa and Otamatea Rivers, both of which are within a day's walk of the pa on Bartons Hill. Other sites can be seen in most directions from Bartons Hill.

Historical sources, as quoted by Borrows (1969) and Butler (1963) and the general topography of the area, suggest that the main portage route to the east coast followed a route via Kaiwaka to the Mangawhai Harbour. The cluster of sites in the area between Maungaturoto and Kaiwaka may reflect the proximity of the portage route. The richness of the Kaipara Harbour area is reflected in the number of sites recorded.

References

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| Butler, R. | 1963 | <u>This Valley in the Hills</u> . Northern Publishing Co, Whangarei. |
| Fox, A. | 1983 | Pa and people in New Zealand: an archaeological estimate of population. <u>N.Z.J. Arch.</u> , 5:5-18. |