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EXCAVATIONS AT WAREA REDOUBT, N118/6, JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1978:
A PRELIMINARY REPORT.

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Warea Redoubt, N118/6, is situated on the Taranaki coast about 5 km north of Cape Egmont (map reference 373698, N118 Egmont, 2nd edition 1965). Excavations at the site began on 2 January and ended 12 February 1978. Financial support came from the Auckland University Research Committee and financial and logistic support from the Anthropology Department, University of Auckland. The work was carried out under permit 1977/66 from the New Zealand Historic Places Trust.

Warea Redoubt was thrown up at the end of April 1865 following the ambush of a small party of soldiers south of Stoney River. It was built by troops of the 43rd (Monmouthshire) Light Infantry under Lieutenant Colonel F.H. Syngé. Laying out and construction was superintended by Lieutenant C.M. Clarke, 57th Regiment. The redoubt was situated to command the road south along the coast and to enable the troops to strike at the many strong paa inland. Opunake Redoubt was thrown up at the same time and it was hoped the two posts would secure land communication with the forces of General Cameron then campaigning in the Patea district to the banks of the Waingongoro River. One month after it was established Warea Redoubt was held by a garrison of 240 all ranks, mostly 43rd Regiment.

The Warea district saw the last fighting of the Second Taranaki War. This began with strikes at paa and villages inland of the redoubt in the winter and spring of 1865 and ended early in 1866 when General Chute, returning to Patea after his march inland of Mt Egmont, took the opportunity of again striking at paa inland. The 43rd Light Infantry sailed for England in March 1866 and was replaced at Warea by the 50th (The Queen's Own) Regiment. The 50th maintained a garrison of about 150 men at the redoubt.

In May 1867 regimental troops were replaced at Warea by 25 militiamen under Lieutenant C. Messenger. The militia in their turn abandoned the post early in 1868. There was a brief occupation by a small Armed Constabulary force before the redoubt was finally abandoned about the end of February 1868.

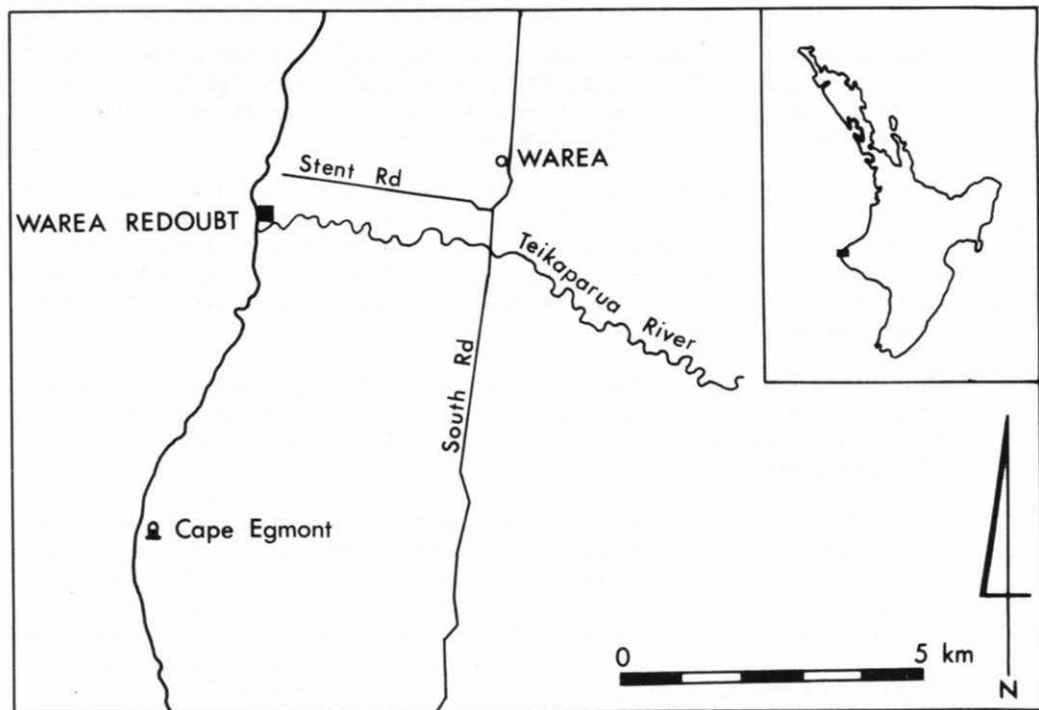


FIGURE 1. Location of Warea Redoubt.

Surface archaeological evidence indicates an unusual work made up of a small redoubt and a partly entrenched rear area between the redoubt proper and the low sea cliff (Figure 2). The actual redoubt consists of a 10 x 10 m main square and a flanking square of about 8 x 8 m at the south-east angle. From surface evidence the function of a curious projection at the opposite (north-west) angle is unclear: it may have included the entrance to the work and could also have provided flanking defence to the otherwise unflanked north and west sides of the redoubt. Outside the defences to the north a number of depressions and mounds indicate an area of huts and other buildings.

Examination of the archaeological evidence suggests a history of changes to the work which fits the known history of occupation. Present surface features are of a second redoubt at the site. The disproportionately large flanking defence for a redoubt only 10 x 10 m, together with the ditch and bank along the sea cliff, indicate the size and shape of the earlier work.

The first redoubt was a straightforward rectangle about 40 x 30 m with flanking defence at two corners covering three sides. The seaward

face was not flanked. The large flanking angle on the present redoubt is in scale with the earlier work. Flanking defence for the northern side of the first redoubt can be made out at the north end of the surviving cliff-top ditch and bank.

The present redoubt uses the flanking angle and a 10 m length of two sides of the original work. The two other sides and the projection from the north-west angle were added. A large part of the original redoubt was thrown down, probably on construction of the second work to prevent an attacking party making use of the cover it might otherwise have provided.

Construction of the second redoubt almost certainly dates from May 1867 when a force of about 150 regular troops was replaced at Warea by 25 militiamen. Such a small garrison would have found it difficult to defend the larger work.

Excavations at Warea made up the second of a two part excavation programme designed to examine European military fortifications of the Taranaki Wars. The site presents marked historical and archaeological contrasts to the Omata Stockade excavated last year. The Omata post was defended by a wooden stockade while at Warea the defences were made up of a ditch and earth bank. Historically Warea Redoubt is more typical of military sites of the period being built by British troops taking the war to the Maori; the Omata Stockade was built by local farmers for protection of their homes and farms. The Omata Stockade was built in early 1860, at the opening of the First Taranaki War. Warea Redoubt was thrown up close to the end of the Second Taranaki War.

Aims of the excavation may be divided between those particular to Warea Redoubt and those of general interest for this class of site. Among particular aims were examination of the curious tongue projecting from the north-west angle of the second redoubt and a search for stratified occupation material securely related to one or other of the two main occupation periods. General aims included examination of the defensive systems of both redoubts, a search for buildings and for evidence of the commonly used soldiers' 'bell tents' of the period, an examination of different areas to see if they could be related to different uses (or even different ranks), a look at the living quarters outside the defences and the securing of a sample of material culture and economic information.

Warea Redoubt is located on the edge of a broad terrace about 6 m above a narrow and steeply shelving boulder beach. Beyond the beach is a rocky shelf extending as much as 300 m offshore at low tide.

About 200 m south is the mouth of the Warea (properly Teikaparua) River. The site now stands in developed farm country but when occupied it was surrounded by open country of native grasses, flax, bracken and some tree fern. The present main road, about 4 km inland, roughly follows the old bush edge, although tongues of bush did extend down river valleys towards the sea.

Areas of a variety of sizes and shapes were excavated and were given Roman numerals in the order of their being opened up. Many areas were later extended and a number of baulks between adjacent squares removed. Separate sequences of metre square numbers were allotted to each square or adjacent group of squares, these being continued as the areas were extended or baulks removed.

Excavations may be grouped into three areas: the first (large) redoubt, the second redoubt and the living quarters outside the defences to the north. 77.5m² was excavated in examination of the first redoubt (Squares IV, V, VI, VIII and IX), 105.5m² in the second redoubt (Squares I, II, III, VII, XI, XII and XIV) and 26m² in the living area (Squares X, XIII and XV), making a total of 209m².

Examination of the earlier redoubt began with a 5 x 2 m trench (Square IV) laid out across the defensive ditch of the north face of the work. Here the ditch was barely discernible on the surface, evidently having been deliberately filled in. On excavation it proved about 1.8 m in depth. At the bottom of the ditch a sand deposit about 30 cm deep contained some cultural material including pieces of glass, stoneware and clay pipes, 'tin' matchboxes, buttons (including 43rd and 50th Regiment buttons) and other artefacts. Above the sand were deep fill deposits containing little cultural material.

Two areas, each initially of two adjacent squares, were excavated inside the first redoubt. At the north-west corner, close to the bastion, two 3 x 3 m squares (V and VI) were opened up, later extended to make a total excavated area of 23.5m². Close to the trench through the ditch two further squares (VIII and IX) were opened up, this area later being extended to make an area 5 x 7 m. Cultural material was not abundant in these areas but did include some buttons, clay pipe and glass fragments and other material.

In the second of the two areas evidence for soldiers' bell tents was found. A large number of stake holes formed segments of two circles about 7 m in diameter. The large number indicate shifting of tent pegs as they worked loose. In this area there were also some substantial post holes and a small pit about 60 cm deep and 40 x 40 cm

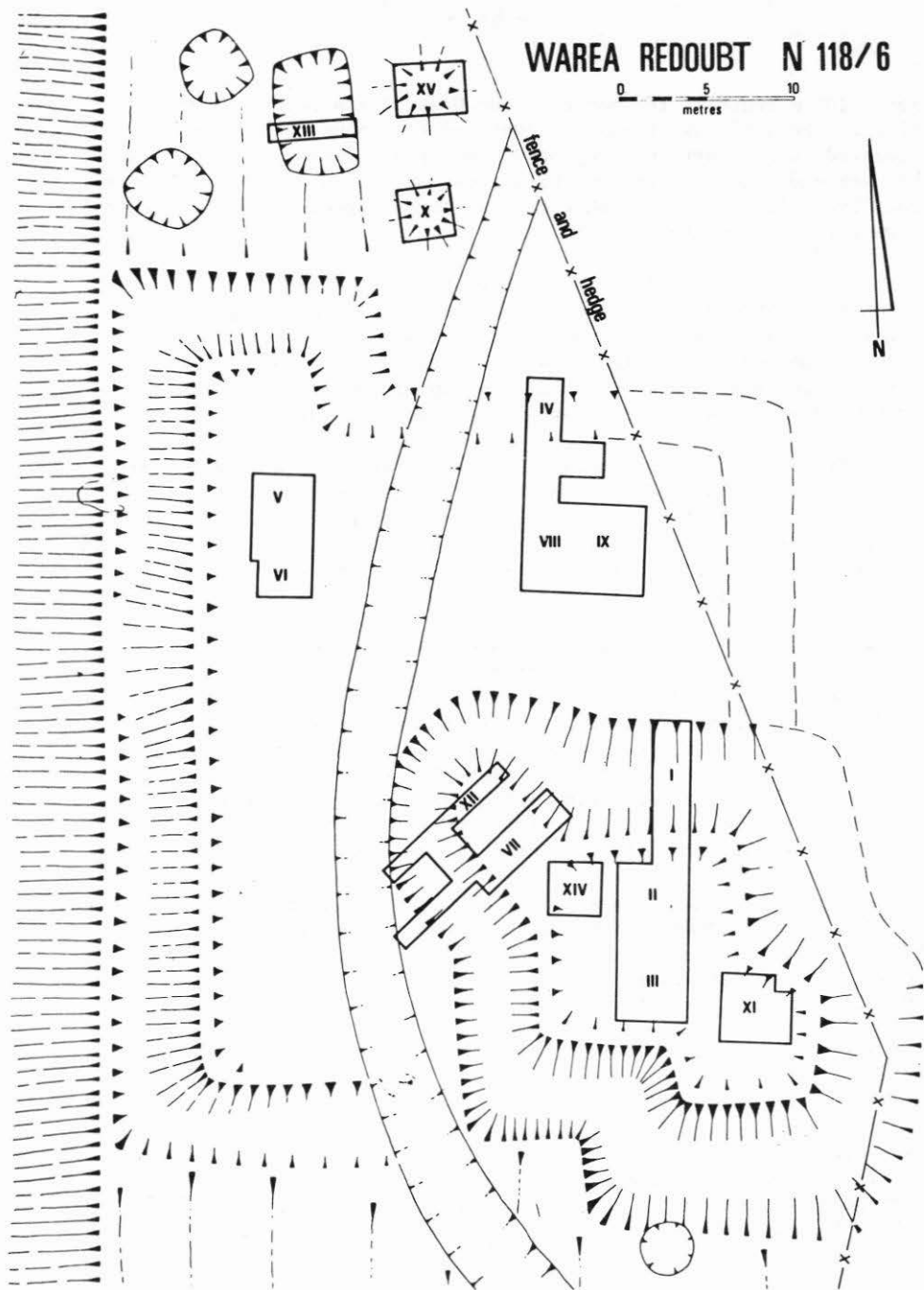


FIGURE 2. Warea Redoubt, plan of excavations.

in plan. In Squares V and VI there were also some stake holes but these did not form an easily recognisable pattern. In both areas a compacted path ran parallel with the north wall of the redoubt between the wall and the line of tents. In Squares V and VI this turned off into the north-west bastion, while in Squares VIII and IX it became apparent on removal of the baulk to Square IV that this was associated with the main entrance to the work.

At the east baulk of the trench through the ditch (Square IV) intact blocks of natural material about 60 cm high extended from both sides part way across the ditch. On both banks above these blocks was a single posthole. When the 2 x 2 m baulk was removed to the south and the compacted path surface in Squares VIII and IX found to run through the wall it became clear these features were in some way connected with the entrance to the redoubt. An extension 2.5 x 2 m was made and evidence for the entrance found to include the path, the actual gateway marked off by two postholes 2.4 m apart, and two beach boulders set into the step in the centre of the doorway to act as stops for what was probably a double gate hinged to both posts. It is likely the blocks of natural material left in the ditch helped brace a bridge to the gateway.

Excavation of the second redoubt began with a trench 8 x 2 m (Square I) across the ditch and through the wall on the north side, and two adjacent 3 x 3 m squares (II and III) inside the redoubt. With extensions and the removal of baulks the total contiguous excavated area here was 52 m².

The ditch was found to have been about 1.6 m deep, and the wall about 3 m wide at its base. Rare cultural material in the ditch fill included pieces of clay pipe and glass, and some 'tin' cans including match boxes. Within the wall a 1 m wide platform of small beach boulders must have belonged to the first redoubt. In Squares II and III were found a number of postholes belonging to a building at least 5 m and possibly 7 m long, and as much as 5 m wide. This occupied a large part of the main square of the redoubt. A path ran into the excavated area inside the north wall of the redoubt, ending abruptly at what is likely to have been a door into the building. Close to the south wall of the redoubt the remains of a compacted path was cut by postholes of the later building. This path was similar to that inside the north wall of the larger redoubt and, along with a number of stakeholes in the adjacent excavated area, suggests an arrangement of defensive wall, path and tents similar to the situation described for that area.

Two other squares were opened up within the small redoubt: Square XI (15m²) in the bastion and Square XIV (9m²) at the north-west angle. In the bastion a number of postholes were found. A compacted clay path or platform about 1 m wide ran alongside the eastern wall. In Square XIV the path apparently leading to a door into the building in the redoubt was found to continue alongside the north wall of the work before cutting through the wall at the north-west angle.

The projection surrounded by a ditch which extended from the north-west angle of the redoubt was examined by means of two trenches (Squares VII and XII) totalling 29.5m². The trenches were designed to cut through the projection and through the defensive ditch on one side. An area 2 x 2 m was opened up to join the two trenches.

A sequence of changes to this angle of the redoubt was discovered. Initially there was to have been a simple unflanked corner here. Before this was completed, however, the partly cut ditch was refilled and a ditch dug at right angles from both sides of the redoubt just before the original corner to loop around a platform a little more than 6 m in diameter. On this platform was placed a stockade about 3 x 3 m square to provide a defensive bastion. The final alteration took place when the ditch was re-dug from the north and west walls of the redoubt and, instead of making right angled corners, now struck off at about 45° to join the earlier ditch further out as it encircled the flanking platform. The triangular area inside the new ditch line was then deliberately refilled. This formed the tongue-shaped projection as it now appears.

The ditch here was about 1.2 to 1.4 m deep. The pebble path running through Square XIV at the north-west angle of the redoubt was found to continue across Square VII and into the stockaded bastion. Neither a way across the ditch nor an external entrance to the bastion was found, but it seems likely the main entrance to the redoubt was through the bastion and the gap in the redoubt angle.

Artefacts found in the various excavated parts of the second redoubt include glass, china and clay pipe pieces, bullets and other material. A token was found issued by Hanks and Lloyd of Sydney to commemorate the opening of the Sydney Railway, 26 September 1855. A brass 'Commissariat Staff' button incorporated in the wall in Square XIV must relate to the earlier, imperial, occupation.

Three small areas were excavated in the living quarters to the north of the redoubt. Two mounds were dug to reveal well made hearths of beach boulders. Square X (3 x 3 m) covered a hearth and part of a cobble pavement in front. The hearth in Square XV (4 x 3 m) on the other hand had a wooden floor in front which was remarkably intact despite its having been burnt. The two hearths face each other over a gap of about 6 m and it seems likely they were within one building. Nearby, a 5 x 1 m trench (Square XIII) was excavated across one of a number of rectangular depressions in the area. At a depth of about 80 cm from the centre of the depression a 3.4 m wide pebble-strewn hut floor was found. Heavy charcoal deposits in the fill about 50 cm above the floor suggest this hut was used in the earlier period of occupation and was more than half filled by erosion at a time when at least some of the surrounding huts and other buildings were still in use.

There was widespread public interest in the dig at Warea. A booklet was prepared and sold through the Taranaki Museum and local stores at Warea and Okato, and to visitors to the site. The local press gave good coverage including a Saturday feature article in the Taranaki Herald (24/2/78) and an excellent background article on the dig in The Sunday Express, a New Plymouth advertising 'giveaway' (22/1/78). TV1 paid a visit and the local radio station ran occasional bulletins on the excavation.

Being just off a public road the excavation was visited most days by interested people. An open day was held on 29 January when about 300 people visited the site. On 6 February the Taranaki branch of the Historic Places Trust ran its traditional Waitangi Day field trip to the Omata Stockade, several other sites of the Taranaki War period south along the coast, and Warea Redoubt.

Archaeologists who worked at the site were: from Auckland, Atholl Anderson, Gerry Barton, Steve Black, Joanna Boileau, Dorothy Brown, Helen Charters, Heather Cormack, Sheridan Easdale, Diane Foley, Anne Geelen, Wendy Harsant, Kate Olsen, Garry Law, Peter Matthews, John Mitchell, Peter Pearce, Ian Perks, Caroline Phillips, Therese Randall and Lynette Williams; from Taranaki, Pat Brophy and Kelvin Day; from Dunedin, Trudy Crerar, Laurence Buckley and Paul Wernham; and from Christchurch, Mike Hurst.

To all the archaeologists I owe a considerable debt for their hard work in hot and humid conditions. Others to whom special thanks are due are Kathy and Imogen Prickett, Ron Lambert, Director of the Taranaki Museum, and Mr and Mrs Harry Chapman and Mr and Mrs John Wells of Warea. Caroline Phillips drew the illustrations.