



NEW ZEALAND  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION

**NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER**



This document is made available by The New Zealand Archaeological Association under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

To view a copy of this license, visit  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>.

A consideration of the Makara Beach area indicates that quite possibly a habitation site lay further back under what is now the beach settlement, and that the beach area was used for cooking. Fragments of bone and shell have been found amongst the houses there. It is more sheltered behind the beach.

Because we found no recognisable artifacts it is impossible to say with any certainty to what phase the site belongs, although the dates are early. Moa bone was recovered in quantity, and other bone material showed the encampment had a varied diet.

I have to thank Mr J. Bruce Palmer, Dr J.C. Yaldwyn for his encouragement and great interest in this excavation, also Dr R.A. Falla and the many who helped with identifications and with the excavation. Miss W. Mumford was of great assistance in drawing the sections and plans.

#### EXCAVATIONS AT WAREHOU PA 1962

For want of a traditional name we propose to use "Warehou" as suggested by J.W. Brodie (see page 158)

This excavation was carried out by the Wellington Archaeological Society under the direction of C.D. Smart from 20th to 24th May, 1962. The report was compiled by Maureen O'Rourke from field records of Mary Oliver, John Daniels, Fred Knox, Michael Hitchings and Colin Smart.

#### SETTING

Site N160/1 (Grid ref. 269304) is situated on the headland at the western extremity of Owhariu Bay. The surrounding countryside is now for the most part barren and hilly, but was once covered by broadleaf podocarp forest. A narrow rocky coastal strip, forming sand or stone beaches, is backed by near vertical slopes which taper off at stream outlets.

Makara Stream is the largest source of fresh water in the immediate vicinity, flowing into the bay at its north eastern sweep. There are, however, two small streams, one of these being situated near the base of the pa site.

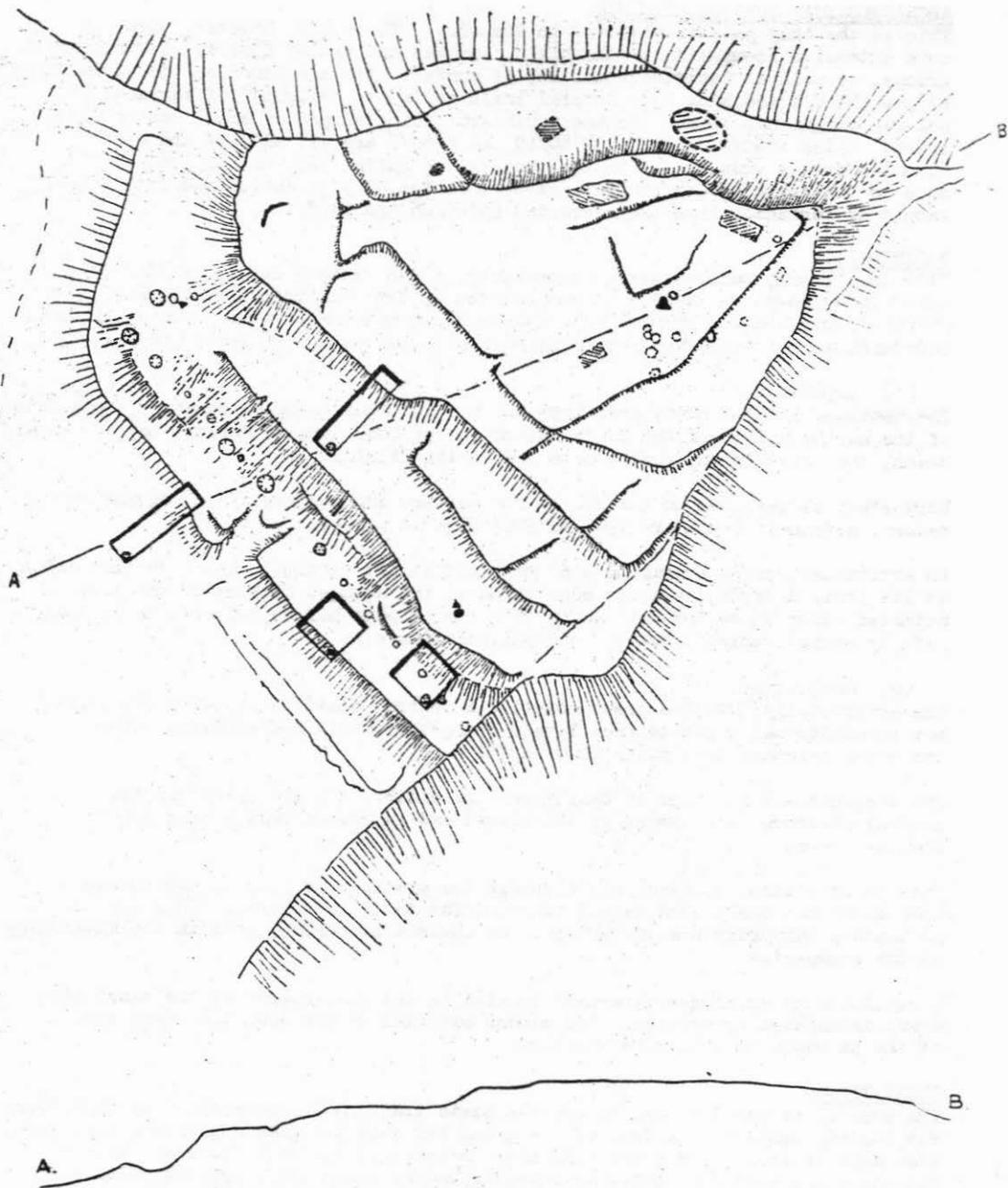
The undermass of the area is composed of greywacke and where exposed through lack of cover it appears as rubbly weathered rock (rotten rock). This rock has a thin covering of steep hill soils, sandy and stony loams, formed from silt and gravel. Small areas of alluvial soil occur in the valley of the Makara Stream.

Shellfish of the rocky shore, fish, and birds would have been plentiful. Moa bones have been found in the area and after the finding of moa bones in midden and oven layers on Makara Beach (N164/2), Yaldwyn (1959:22) considers that moa was also hunted here.

#### CLIMATE

The following records have been obtained from the Meteorological Office, Wellington:

Temperature: Yearly mean of 51.4; mean daily maximum and minimum in 1961 of 56.6 and 47.5 respectively; relative humidity (9a.m.) 86pc.  
Rainfall: 47" spread over a total of 135 raindays in 1961.  
Frost: 28 days in 1961.  
Gales: 24 days of gale in 1961 concentrated mainly from July to September.



PLAN AND SECTION OF WAREHOU PA

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURFACE EVIDENCE

This is the only pa site recorded in the area. There are, however, signs of more extensive occupation on the hills, beaches and valley floors. Several small groups, as well as isolated examples, of surface pits are known on the surrounding ridges (N160/4 and N164/2). Several small series or "flights" of terraces of unknown origin can be seen on the southward-facing slopes of small east-running spurs. Sites N160/2, N160/35, N160/49 and N164/2 are all middens and are situated over a wide area. In the vicinity of Smiths Bay, rather less than a mile to the north of Ohariu Bay, several series of pits associated with a small amount of terracing have been recorded (N160/45 and N160/47).

WAREHOU PA.

This is a fairly well-preserved promontory pa (as defined by Golson 1957:73), about 200' above sea level. It was located by Best and McLeod (1916:map), Best (1919:10) and Adkin (1959:map VI), who could provide neither name nor traditional information, and described rather inaccurately and mapped by Davis (1959)

## (1) Defence.

The headland extends northwards into the bay and thus situated commands a wide view of the northern part of the South Island across Cook Strait, Ohariu Bay and Makara Beach, the coast to the north, Mana and Kapiti Islands.

Very steep slopes down to the sea on the eastern and western sides provide strong natural defence. These are 150' to 200' high in places.

An artificial scarp, averaging 6'6" high and almost vertical with a shallow ditch at its foot, defends the south edge which is the weakest feature of the site. Situated about 9' behind this scarp is a row of post holes (referred to as small pits by Davis), which probably held palisade posts.

## (2) Habitation.

The artificially levelled areas comprise a central platform of about 2750sq.ft., but an additional seven terrace levels bring the total area enclosed within the outer defences to almost 14500 sq.ft.

The terraces are flat and of fairly uniform width. All are lower than the central platform (the lowest is 12' below) and separated from each other by shallow scarps.

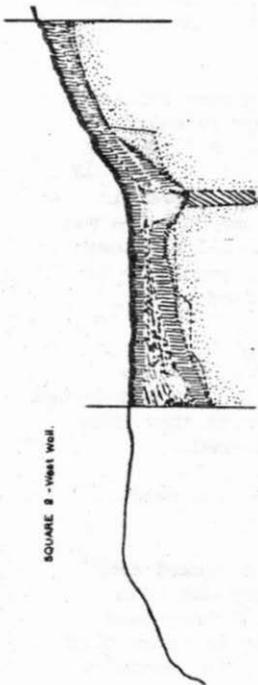
This pa is without surface pits although the presence of pits in the immediate area shows that the ground is not too hard for their excavation. This may indicate a temporary use of the pa or an absence of surface pits in the assemblage of the occupants.

A small amount of midden material, located in the S.W. corner of the habitation area, is exposed by erosion. Any midden material thrown down the steep sides of the pa would no longer be visible.

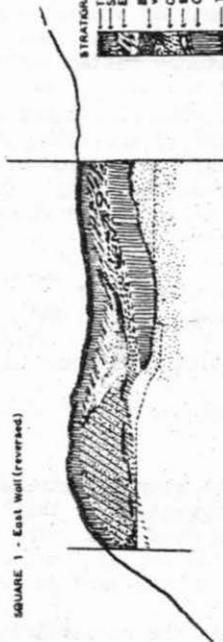
EXCAVATIONS

The excavation was intended to provide basic training in archaeological techniques for Society members. As four of the group had some previous experience they were each able to select and examine an area to answer specific questions. Michael Hitchings and Fred Knox chose to investigate the ditch and scarp; Mary Oliver's square took in one of the larger postholes behind the scarp; while John Daniels, by moving further up the site, hoped to find evidence of habitation (map, p. 152). The remaining 15 members who attended during the four-day period worked in one or other of these areas.

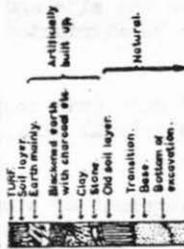
SQUARE 8 - West Wall.



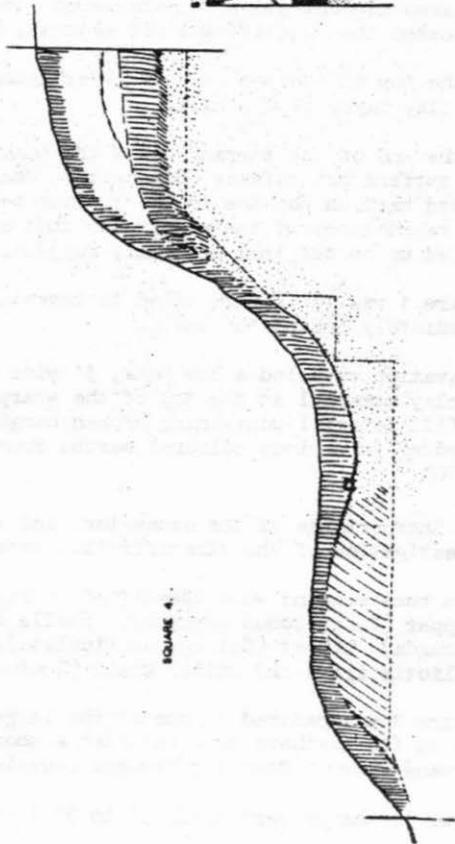
SQUARE 1 - East Wall (reverse)



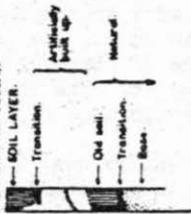
STRATIGRAPHIC COLUMN:



SQUARE 4.



STRATIGRAPHIC COLUMN:



Holes have been dug in several places on the site and some turf squares were uncovered during excavation. These can be attributed to the local fossickers who plague every part of New Zealand.

Square 4 was a rectangle 20' long by 5' wide (see sections, p.154 ). Its length lay in the north-south direction across a small bank, a shallow ditch and up the scarp to the edge of the terrace above.

On the eastern edge of the site an arrangement of stones became apparent and at first was thought to be a fireplace. However, further investigation revealed a pattern inconsistent with this idea. The stones rested on top of a mottled clay layer lying just below the top humus layer; the top of the clay layer is probably strewn with stones such as those uncovered. The clay layer was clearly seen in the walls of a trench dug along the west side of the site, and two more stones were seen to lie on it, one in each wall. In addition a piece of pumice and a rather large piece of charcoal were found together on the layer. Charcoal seemed to be spread over it. The charcoal was slightly concentrated along the foot of the bank as though some of it had been washed down.

Along the entire west edge of the section a trench one foot wide was dug: the west wall is presented in the section drawing. At all depths the material contained a sparse concentration of water-worn pebbles. At first it was thought that this indicated the material was not natural, but this view was later altered.

At the top of the bank a clay layer lying on the top of an old soil was found. The clay layer is man-made.

On the end of the terrace below the bank the clay is extremely hard packed near the surface but softer underneath. One suggestion is that the clay has been packed hard on top due to the surface being used as a path. On the other hand the resemblance of the pattern to that at the top of the bank, that is extra clay heaped up on original material, suggests that the hard packed layer is man-made.

Square 1 was 10' square sited to investigate the possibility of palisading immediately behind the scarp.

Excavation revealed a low bank, 3' wide and 1'8" deep at its maximum, of built-up clay material at the top of the scarp. Behind this was a very confused mass of fill material containing broken hangi stones, charcoal, shell and fish bones embedded in various coloured earths from about 3" below the surface to a depth of 10".

The inexperience of the excavators and the lack of time did not permit full investigation of the stratification revealed.

Fish bone remains were identified as Parrot fish (*Pseudolabrus coccineus*) and Snapper (*Pangrosomus auratus*). Shells identified were Cat's eye (*Lunella smaragda*), Limpet (*Cellana denticulata*), Radiate Limpet (*Cellana radians*) Paua (*Haliotis iris*) and Shield shell (*Scutus breviculus*).

Square 2 was centred on one of the larger postholes 9' back from the scarp face and on its northern edge extended a short way up the sloping scarp of the terrace above. Four layers were revealed during the course of excavations.

Layer 1: the present soil, 3" to 5" in thickness. Fairly clean.

Layer 2: appearing only in S.W. corner of section (see section) this layer consisted of clay lenses mixed with earth, lumps of charcoal, broken shell and bone. It petered out at the same level as the top of the small post-hole.

Layer 3: this was a dark brown sterile layer on which occupation took place. In the northern sloping part of section layer 1 and 3 were not readily separated. The small, posthole shown in section, see fig. penetrated this layer to a depth of 1'8". The posthole fill consisted of dark grey wet mud. The larger posthole in the centre of the square measured 15" in diameter narrowing to 8" at a depth of 2'10". The fill was a soft dark grey material except on the S.W. arc of the hole where a damper material had apparently been tightly packed. Pieces of charcoal and partly burnt wood were scattered throughout the dry fill together with some decaying wood. Both postholes continued down into layer 4.

Layer 4: (Natural) This was an undisturbed yellow clay flecked with brownish black iron oxide.

Square 3 contained two small ovens without shell or bone. These were about 4" to 5" below the present surface. The natural in the square was completely undisturbed and regular on the surface. The soil cover was thin and the scarp to the terrace behind was still in good condition.

#### CONCLUSIONS

The only feature of the pa examined in any detail was the outermost defensive ditch and scarp, with associated palisade. Squares 4, 1 and 2 provide stratigraphic sections continuing from outside the shallow ditch, up and through the scarp, across the narrow terrace behind the scarp to the palisade line at the foot of the slope behind. Sections from squares 4 and 2 show the old soil layer belonging to the original sloping ground surface. The northernmost half of the square 1 section, shows this old soil layer also but it becomes obscured under a layer of hard clay material. The material deposited upon the original ground surface to build up the scarp is for the most part, soft, irregular and lensed material of various origins and includes cooking refuse. The hard clay material of the top of the scarp, showing only in square 1, appears to be a part of this irregular mixture. Nowhere along the top of the scarp was any evidence of palisading discovered and it seems the next line of defence within the scarp is the palisade some 9' behind it.

From such a small scale excavation which yielded no artifactual material it is difficult to reconstruct much of the prehistory of the site. With the evidence provided by Brodie (see pp. ) in his interpretation of the radiocarbon dates, and the meagre evidence from the excavations, it is possible to recognise three stages of occupation:

- (1) the earliest evidence consists only of midden, as redeposited material, incorporated in the built-up portion of the scarp and associated terrace.
- (2) the artificial defence (scarp) constructed of various materials including the midden material of stage (1); associated with this stage is the palisade (estimated as about an average date of 1715, by Brodie).
- (3) occupation evidence in the form of shell, flint and obsidian flakes (dated as "less than 160 years" or after about 1790)

Although stages (2) and (3) appear fairly well-established, the same does not apply to stage (1). The inclusion of occupation material in the earthworks of stage (2) implies its prior existence but does not indicate how much earlier it is in relation to stage (2). It could, in fact, be almost contemporary, perhaps even representing the food refuse of the people constructing the earthworks.

REFERENCES

- Adkin, G.L. 1959. "The Great Harbour of Tara". Wellington.
- Best, Elsdon. 1917-19. "The Land of Tara and they that dwelt therein". J.P.S. 26:143-69; 27:1-25, 49-71, 99-114, 165-77; 28:1-17, 79-96, 123-33.
- Best, Elsdon & McLeod, H.N. 1916. "Map of Wellington Country District Shewing Native Names" Wellington.
- Davis, Susan. 1959. "A summary of field archaeology from the Dominion Museum Group" N.Z.A.A. Newsletter, v2n4, pp.15-19.
- Golson, J. 1957. "Field archaeology in New Zealand" J.P.S. 66:64-109.
- Yaldwyn, John. 1957. "Moa remains from the Wellington district" N.Z.A.A. Newsletter, v2n4, pp.20-25.

## A RECONNAISSANCE OF WAREHOU PA, MAKARA

by J.W. Brodie

This note records the results of a reconnaissance made in 1957 and 1958 by Martin Hill and the writer, of the well preserved remains of a small fortified pa on the western headland of Owhariu Bay, Wellington, overlooking the small indentation known as Warehou Bay. (Grid reference N160, 269305). The existence of this pa has been briefly mentioned by McLeod in Best (1919), Davis (1959), and Daniels (1960).

The pa is located on a narrow headland projecting to the north. The site is rendered secure on the converging eastern and western sides by steep coastal cliffs up to 100ft. high. The eastern cliff is located on a fault zone and is in parts further oversteepened because of this.

Obvious remains of defensive works are restricted to a ditch and bank backed by a terrace which formerly carried a heavy palisade, the post holes of which, and in some instances the post-butts, are still extant. The ditch and palisade extended east-west from cliff to cliff, and enclosed a small triangular terraced area. The palisade was approached by a zigzag pathway up the steep southern slope.

Further excavation has since been carried out by the Wellington Archaeological Society and is reported elsewhere (in this issue).

In at least four positions on the coastal ridge to the south, groups of terraces are found on the sheltered southeast-facing sides of minor spurs. These extend from the pa site southwards for about a mile. Extensive middens are found on the valley floor of Warehou Bay stream immediately below the pa. Half a mile to the east is the long-occupied village site at Owhariu Bay.