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Field Archaeology of the Māhia Peninsula (Nukutaurua mai Tāwhiti), Northern Hawke's Bay, New Zealand

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ABSTRACT

Surveys carried out from 1982 to 1990 and a review of aerial photographic coverage provide a broad understanding of site distribution and settlement pattern. The western side of the Māhia Peninsula was little settled except in the embayments at its northern extremity. Much of the eastern side, especially the north-eastern aspect, was settled with particular concentrations in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries on the coastal strip and the edge of the high terrace. The earliest historical records of Monkhouse and Banks in 1769 on the *Endeavour* provide descriptions of some surveyed sites. In the 1820s and 1830s, Nukutaurua on the eastern side of the peninsula was a refuge for many Ngāti Kahungūnu under the protection of the Ngā Puhī chief, Te Wera.

Keywords: NGĀTI KAHUNGŪNU, TE WHĀNAU A RONGOMAIWĀHINE, PĀ, HORTICULTURE, SETTLEMENT PATTERN, DITCH-AND-BANK FENCES, NUKUTAURUA, MAUNGAKĀHIA, KAIUKU, PORTLAND ISLAND (WAIKAWA), JAMES COOK.

INTRODUCTION

The Māhia Peninsula is a major promontory, offering a number of sheltered landings for coastal voyagers, on the east coast of the North Island. The Māori name is Te Māhia or Nukutaurua mai Tāwhiti. 'The Mahia' or 'Mahia' in nineteenth century accounts probably refers either to Whāngāwehi (Fig. 1) or to Waikokupu on the mainland in the bight formed on the west of the peninsula. These offer the only secure anchorages on the peninsula. 'Table Cape' probably refers to the specific locality of Nukutaurua on the north-east aspect of the peninsula (Fig. 1). This paper includes a new review and analysis of aerial photographs and updates and synthesises the earlier surveys of the peninsula itself.

In the 1820s and 1830s the Māhia Peninsula appears to have been a refuge for Ngāti Kahungūnu, pressed on several sides by the destabilisation of tribal relations following the Ngā Puhī raids. Ngāti Kahungūnu were subject to pressure both from the south (from Ngāti Raukawa and others) and from the west (Smith 1910: 281, 320–28). At the Māhia Peninsula, these forces were balanced and it appears to have become an important place of refuge for all of Ngāti Kahungūnu.

Archaeological research includes a few site records and surveys. Wellman (1962: 38–41) recorded an 'occupation layer' over some 300 m of a low cliff (the eroded edge of the

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TE MAHIA PENINSULA

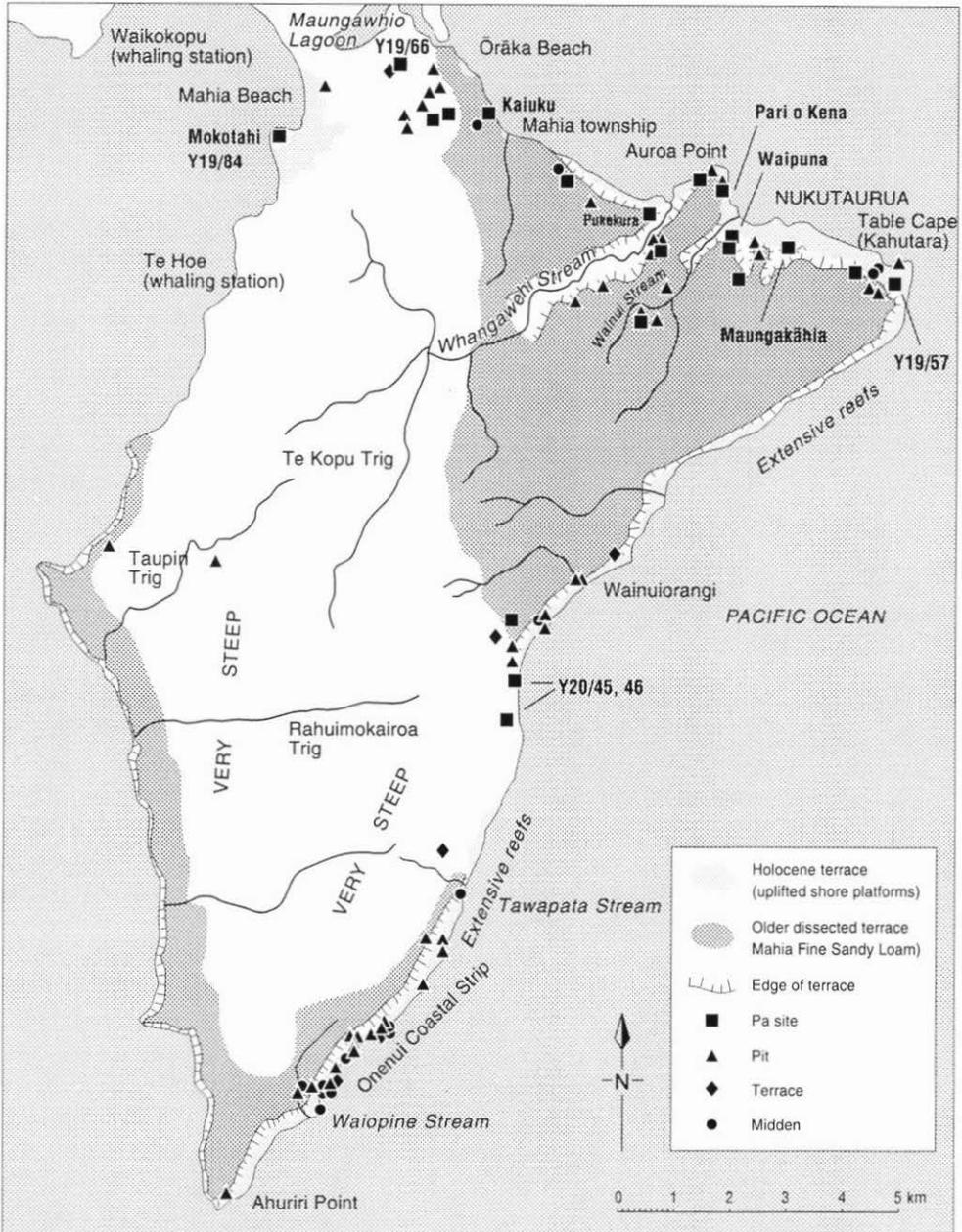


Figure 1: Landforms and distribution of sites, Māhia Peninsula (after Berryman 1988: Figure 4.2; Jeal and Jeal 1982, 1984, 1986, 1990) and plots from site recording file. The northern tip of Portland Island (not shown) is 1.4 km south-east of Ahuriri Point.

coastal strip) south of the Māhia township. The site may be early since it lies on Loisel's pumice, a sea-rafted pumice that is sometimes found in early archaeological horizons. There have been no subsequent field inspections of the site. Mary and Mick Jeal conducted archaeological surveys on the Māhia Peninsula and Portland Island from 1982 to 1990 (Jeal and Jeal 1982, 1984, 1986, 1990). They relied on vertical aerial photographs taken in 1945 and extensive field walking. Portland Island is not within the scope of this paper but it is worth mentioning Millar's (1992) work documenting the Gordon Field (lighthouse keeper about 1910) collection of artefacts held by Hawke's Bay Cultural Trust. It includes shell fishhooks and shank-barbed fishhooks. Captain John Bollons (a master of the vessels which serviced the lighthouses in the first decades of the twentieth century) also collected a wide range of items from Māhia and Portland Island. Some are in the Auckland Museum and others with the bulk of the Bollons Collection in Te Papa in Wellington.



Figure 2: High terracelands of Māhia viewed from the north-west, about 1970. The bay at centre is Nukutaurua, with Pari o Kena and Auroa Point in the foreground (Photo courtesy Institute of Geological and Nuclear Sciences).

SETTING

Much of the Māhia Peninsula is formed from uplifted marine terraces (Figs 1, 2). In the east it has a distinctive flat surface sloping down slightly to the north. The central and western parts are dissected, steep and hilly. The western coast is cliffed for the most part, with few landing places, and exposed to north-west winds. The eastern side contrasts with the west. Narrow coastal terraces rise abruptly to the extensive, uplifted marine terraces. The coastal terraces were created by Holocene uplift and average about 10 m above sea level, compared with the general height of the high (Pleistocene) terrace of some 100 m above sea level (Berryman 1988: Fig. 4.2). The east is exposed to the full force of the Pacific Ocean but it has a number of open bays, including the long area of beach and dunes that connects the peninsula to the mainland. On the north-eastern margins of the peninsula the concentration of sites is comparable with the densest coastal settlement anywhere on the East Coast.

CHRONOLOGY

The age of the Holocene marine terraces has been documented by Berryman, using the principle of episodic uplift by tectonic action of wave platforms. These eventually form more or less systematic levels of terraces in what becomes the 'coastal strip'. The age of formation of a terrace provides a maximum age for settlement on it. Berryman described four levels of coastal terrace. The lowest, *terrace 1*, extends up to 15 m inland from the high water mark. It is dated to about 200–300 years BP, i.e., it was lifted from a position as a wave platform at that time (Berryman 1988: 77; Berryman *et al.* 1992: 141 and Fig. 6). On this lowest terrace there is evidence of Māori occupation at Table Cape (Berryman 1988: 75) but not elsewhere. On the basis of Berryman's dating, any Māori occupation which may in future be recorded on the lowest terrace (and it probably exists) must be younger than 200–300 years old.

The greatest number of visible archaeological sites lie on Berryman's *terraces 2 and 3*, which extend inland up to 150 m from the high water mark. These terraces are dated to about 1600 and 1900 years BP respectively, so they are too old to provide a useful maximum age for settlement on them. Sites on these terraces include pits at Table Cape (Y19/52; N117/39)³ and the ditch-and-bank fences and pits at Nukutaurua. Berryman was also able to locate sub-surface Māori 'occupation sites' at 'Putiki Point' (actually Tuahuru Point) in the north-east, Auroa Point (near pā Y19/41 [N117/28], Pariokena on Fig. 1), Nukutaurua, south-west of Table Cape and near Wainuiorangi to the south. The sites recorded are mainly charcoally soils and midden. Berryman (1988) obtained several ¹⁴C dates of relevance to archaeology under or in these occupation layers as minimum ages for the surfaces of his terrace chronosequence. These are shown in Table 1. A maximum age for settlement on the coastal terraces south-west of Table Cape (NZ 7300) indicates settlement into the nineteenth

³ Y19/52 is the New Zealand Archaeological Association metric site record number. It is followed by the old inch-to-the-mile map series number, the system used by Jeal and Jeal (1982, 1984, 1986, 1990).

TABLE 1

Details of radiocarbon ages mentioned in text. Source: New Zealand radiocarbon database. Calibrated age ranges are rounded to nearest 5 years. All samples except NZ6679 were submitted by Berryman. (The reporting format follows that of Stuiver and Polach 1977; for calibration of marine shell dates $\Delta R = -30 \pm 13$, see McFadgen and Manning 1990.)

Laboratory Number	CRA	Std Error	$\delta^{13}\text{C}$	Cal AD (2 S.D.)	Material dated
NZ7300	254	119	0.19	1810–1940	Shells (<i>Haliotis iris</i>)
NZ7281	899	66	1.65	1310–1505	Shells (<i>Cookia sulcata</i>)
NZ5154	545	80	1.40	1550–1940	Shells (<i>Haliotis iris</i>)
NZ5148	622	32	0.7	1585–1695	Shells (<i>Cookia sulcata</i>)
NZ5319	551	49	0.9	1645–1870	Shells (<i>Melagraphia aethiops</i> , <i>Cellana radians</i> , <i>Protothaca crassicosta</i>)
NZ6679	664	58	2.18	1490–1700	Shells (species not given)

century. Midden or 'Maori fires' or 'Maori occupation', on the lower coastal terraces along the eastern coast, is aged 1310–1695 cal AD (NZ 7281, NZ 5154 and NZ 5148) and is clearly pre-European. On Portland Island there is a direct date on midden of 1645–1870 cal AD (NZ 5319), regarded by the submitter as a maximum age for the midden. The single unpublished determination of age for the pā Y19/57 (N147/44) at Table Cape is 1490–1700 cal AD (NZ 6679) or about AD 1500 to 1700. This is a maximum age for the building of the defences. The minimum age is set by the observations of the pā in 1769, when palisades were sighted and sketched. This pā may therefore have been in use for a long time, taking advantage of the lengthy outlooks north (to the Gisborne area) and south along the coast.

In general this research demonstrates the widespread occupation of the peninsula in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. We speculate that there may have been early open settlements, e.g., Y19/66 (see below), which had fortifications added later, but these have not been positively dated.

SITE DISTRIBUTION

The analysis of settlement and horticulture in the following sections is based on a plot of site types. Key archaeological site types were allocated symbols and their distribution plotted from the computer index to the New Zealand Archaeological Association central file (also known as CINZAS) at a scale of about 1:75,000. In the CINZAS file, sites are allocated somewhat complicated subject or site type codes, e.g., 'pa with pits and middens' (New Zealand Archaeological Association 1999: 123–26). This requires decisions to be made about how data are grouped and presented. A print-out of 'all pā' combined with 'all pits' would over-print a certain proportion of pit symbols over pā symbols and produce a potentially confusing image. The alternative of a separate map for each site type or different symbols for combination site types was not feasible.

In Figure 1 the symbols represent a hierarchy of types of settlement. For convenience of distributional analysis, the pā are first, followed by pits, terraces and middens in that order. This allows an analysis of pā distribution and distribution of storage pits (assuming that all pā have some pits). Smaller unfortified settlements with pits and terraces are recognised from the presence of pits and terraces. The symbols (New Zealand Archaeological Association 1999: 123–26) were derived as follows:

- Pā: codes AD, CB, CC, CD, DC, EI,
- Pits but not pā with pits: codes AM, AO, BI, CF, CY, CH, CO, CP, CS, EJ,
- Terraces or house-floors but not pits or pā with terraces: codes AP, AY, BQ, CU, CV, EK, GO,
- Middens but not pā or pits or terraces with middens: codes AA, AV, CE, CI, GM.

RESOURCES AND SETTLEMENT

FAUNAL RESOURCES

The reef platform of the immediate offshore area extends out on average some 150 metres along 10 km of the eastern coastline. The species most frequently represented in middens include paua (*Haliotis* spp.), cat's eye (*Turbo smaragdus*), Cook's turban (*Cookia sulcata*) and 'limpets' (family, Patellidae). For want of survey utilising a test-pitting methodology, middens are under-recorded, especially on the coast from Table Cape south to Wainuiorangi.

At Onenui, midden (Y20/30; N127/14) which has mostly been surface-collected from dune blow-outs, contained sea lion (*Phocarctus hookeri*), fur seal (*Arctocephalus forsteri*), tuatara (*Sphenodon punctatus*), moa (no species identification reported), elephant seal (*Mirounga leonina*) and rats. There were butchery cuts on some of the seal bones (Jeal 1987) and Mayor Island obsidian was identified. The middens appear to have lain on the foredune areas adjacent to small open settlements in which many ovens, flake assemblages and other archaeological deposits were exposed by wind.

HORTICULTURE

The soils of the high terrace and the extensive coastal strip on the eastern side of the peninsula are well suited to horticulture. The surface of the high terrace is mainly Mahia fine sandy loam (Rijkse 1975) — deep topsoils, largely composed of weathered tephra (air-fall ash) from the Taupō volcanic centre. Records of pits are frequent but overall numbers are not high compared with elsewhere on the East Coast. There is a high proportion of raised-rim pits. Also of importance in horticulture are the older Holocene marine terraces of the coastal strip (Berryman's terraces 2 and 3), averaging some 100 metres in width above high water mark. The evidence for horticulture on these soils can only be obtained by inference from the distribution of pit storage. The striking concentration of pā from Y19/66 at Ōraka to Y19/57 at Table Cape (Kahutara Point) forms the seaward margin of an area totalling some 15 km² of the Māhia Fine Sandy Loam. This area would have been well suited to horticulture (for general view of locality see Fig. 2). There is no recorded soil evidence of gardening on the high terrace. However, there are pits on all of the pā on the peninsula, most of which lie at the edges of the high terrace. There are also occasional scatters of isolated pits on the edge of the high terrace away from the pā. Because of the height of the climb, it does not seem feasible that people would have grown kūmara on the coastal strip and carried the harvest up to the edge of the high terrace. There is settlement on the high terrace with abundant pit storage, even where there is no coastal strip, e.g., at Whāngāwehi, on the pā, Pukekura (Y19/23).

Evidence of gardening on the coastal strip consists of many small scatters of storage pits. These are common on the extensive strip at Onenui on the south-east coast (Y20/26, 27), at the Wainuiorangi stream (where the strip is some 2 km by 200 m in extent); and at Nukutaurua (Fig. 1). At Nukutaurua, nineteenth century and earlier settlement is scattered over several levels of uplifted terraces which extend inland from the high water mark for up to 150 m. These sites include extensive ditch-and-bank fences, areas of ploughing 'lands', the outline of the earthen walls of whare (houses), and small clusters of raised-rim pits.

In October 1769, a season when garden preparation would be most obvious, Banks' journal confirms gardening. It would not have been possible to see gardening on the high terrace, only on the colluvium or sloping coastal terraces at its foot.

In sailing along shore we could clearly see several spots of land cultivated, some fresh turned up and laying in furrows like ploughed land, others with plants growing upon them some younger and some older; we also saw in two places high rails upon the Ridges of hills, but could only guess that they belong to some superstition as they were in lines not inclosing any thing. (Beaglehole 1962 (1): 409).

PĀ

Most of the 19 recorded pā are of relatively simple forms, following the typical East Coast model. A ditch, usually single but occasionally double, cuts off a point. The edge of the high terrace may be cut off by rectangular or dog-leg sections of ditch, similar to the method of creating pā on river flats in the Wairoa River valley or Poverty Bay. Small 'islands' of the high terrace are reinforced by steepening the upper part of the slope leading to the summit, or creating an encircling ditch just below the upper surface, or both.

Almost all pā are on the high terrace landform. The points or remnant 'islands' created by stream erosion frequently have pā built on them. Where there are only limited tracts of the terrace landform, for example, between Table Cape (Kahutara) and Ahuriri Point, some ridge pā take advantage of the coastal cliffs. Where the cliffs fall directly to the modern wave platform above the mouths of Waianiwāniwa and Tangawa Streams, there is a remarkable assemblage of at least three pā with associated small groups of pits (Y20/13, 45 and 460). Another prominent pā, on the western side of the peninsula, is Mokotahi (Y19/84) south of Mahia Beach township. This has several groups of pits and terraces on its leading ridges and the whole crest of the hill is surrounded by a skirt of wave-cut cliffs.

There are no pā on the lower, recently uplifted terraces of the coastal strip, although pits and numerous middens have been recorded. The depth of dissection is seldom great; streams have cut down little more than 2 m in most areas. This factor, plus the ready accessibility of the edge of the high terrace to all of the eastern coastal localities, probably explains the lack of fortifications. It appears that there were always better locations than the low terraces of the coastal strip for building fortifications.

PUKEKURA

This pā (Y19/23; N117/10) lies on the headland formed by a narrow extension of the high terrace (80 m above sea level) to the west of the point where the Whāngāwehi Stream enters the sea. The mouth of the Whāngāwehi Stream was a major point of settlement, offering a good anchorage and easy access to freshwater. In the nineteenth century this place was used by whalers (Prickett 2002: 116). The Whāngāwehi landing area is a narrow incision leading inland to the stream. The pā lies north-west of the narrow harbour. It is 105 m long and averages less than 5 m in width (Fig. 3). The landward defences consist of a double ditch and bank some 18 m long, with a further exterior bank, i.e., a third bank. The exterior bank is difficult to detect on the vertical aerial photograph (R.N. 451/9,10; taken 20/3/45). To the east, dropping down to the stream flats, are two subsidiary ridges with

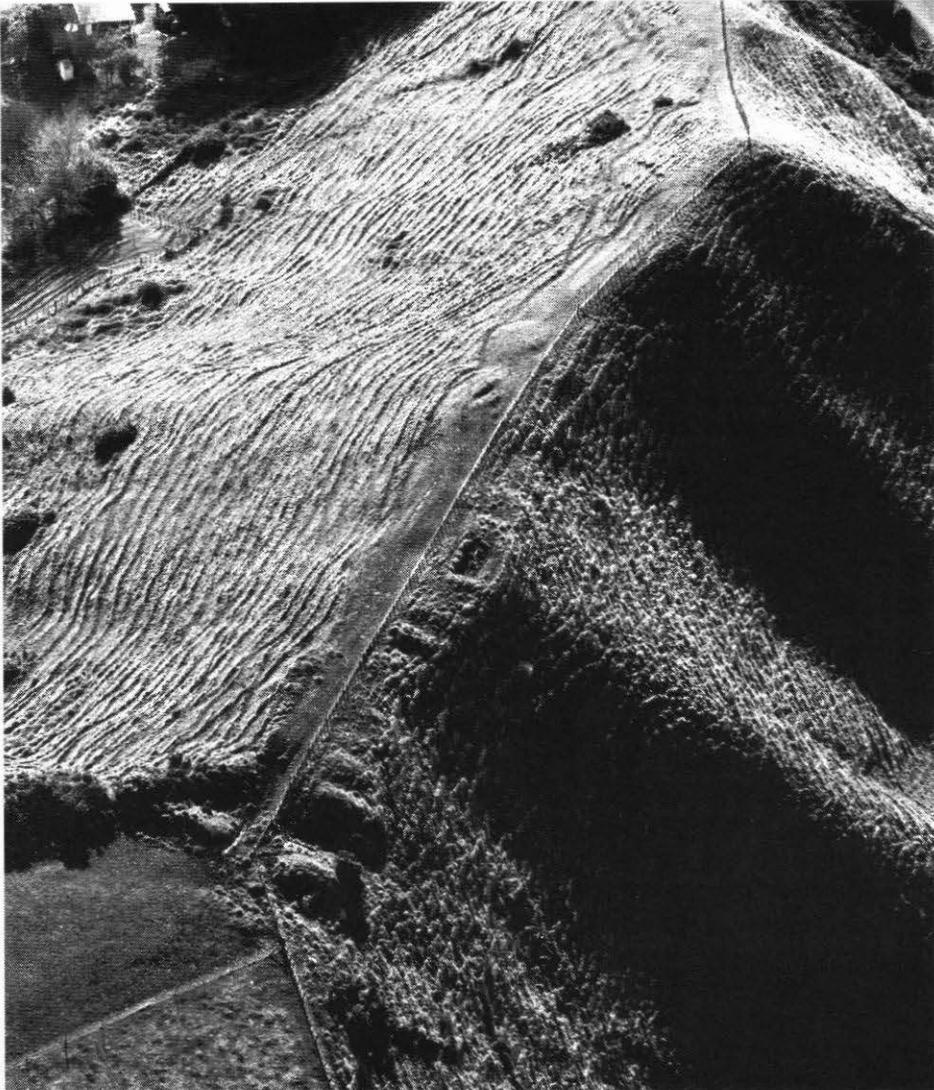


Figure 3: Oblique aerial photograph (from the south-west) of Pukekura (Y19/23) above the mouth of the Whāngāwehi Stream (July 1992).

indistinct terracing. There are several raised-rim pits immediately within the defences of the pā. Midden is exposed on the eastern slopes below the pits, where there is also a single surviving karaka tree.

THE PĀ AT NUKUTAURUA

Vertical aerial photographs of this locality taken in 1938 and 1945 (R.N. 451/11, 20.3.45) show ample surface evidence of human settlement (Fig. 4; for the 1945 aerial photograph see Jones 1994: 251–55). These photographs show a broad bay, with extensive rock platforms just below the water surface. These reefs extend some 150 m offshore and have many channels running more or less at right angles to the shoreline. On each of the surrounding ridges of the bay there are pā: Pari o Kena to the north, the Waipuna complex in the centre, and Maungakāhia to the south-east.

Pari o Kena (Y19/41; N117/28) lies on an intermediate level (40 m above sea level) of the high terrace about 300 m south-east of Auroa Point (Figs 1, 2). The terrace is an isolated remnant 195 m long and 45 m wide at its south-eastern end where it drops in a cliff to the narrow coastal platform. There is a deep ditch/terrace and scarp defence to the south-west and north-east of the pā. This was constructed in the naturally steep slope down from the high terrace, to create an artificial defensive perimeter of some 400 m. There are some pits at the south-eastern end of the defended platform of the pā and also on its lateral defensive terrace to the south-west. The pā has been quarried at its south-eastern end.

The Waipuna complex (Y19/45, 46; N117/32, 33) comprises a large irregular area of the high terrace at about 85 m above seal level. It is recorded as two main sites (Fig. 4 and detail A shown in Fig. 5). The northern part is on a fragment of the high terrace (65 m above sea level), 200 m inland from the coastline and just below the inland edge of the high terrace. In the distant past, it has perhaps slumped away from the main high terrace edge. The whole of this fragment is fortified by a defensive ditch or steepened scarp forming a ring-ditch pā, Waipuna (Y19/46). It is more or less rectangular in plan (65 m long and varying from 17 to 35 m in width, the longer width being to the north-east). The foot of the lateral scarp or trench is about 4 m below the level of the platform.

To the south of Waipuna, there is an island or point in the high terrace which has been defended in a complex arrangement (Fig. 5). This pā (Y19/45) consists of three sets of defensive ditches and banks (aerial photograph R.N. 451/10,11; 20/3/45) defending three lobes of an elongated island of the high terrace. On its southern end, a double ditch and bank defended a narrow access way to the northern part of the high terrace ('C' on Fig. 5). These ditches were about 15 m apart and extended about 15 m across the ridge. Just inside these ditches were two, possibly three, raised rim pits. On the broad north-easternmost lobe was a double dog-leg enclosure of defensive ditch and bank ('A' on Fig. 5). Originally small in area, this enclosure appears to have been extended with a further ditch and bank, to enclose a wider area 30 m by 12 m in plan. To the north-west of this pā was another, more pointed lobe, defended by a single transverse ditch and bank 17 m long enclosing an area 30 m long ('B' on Fig. 5). All these defences are today largely bulldozed out. The ditches and banks of 'A' and 'B' show as slight depressions and distinct parch-marks with greener grass over the ditches. The easternmost portions of both the dog-leg lengths of the ditches and banks of 'A' (which survive behind a fence) have a 2-m-high scarp from base-of-ditch to top-of-bank (see section X to X1 for approximate profile of one of the ditches). To the south, the short double ditch and bank visible in the 1945 aerial photograph ('C' in Fig. 5), which ran across the narrow ridgeline linking the complex to the main part of the high terrace, has been destroyed by the public road. Overall, this is one of the more remarkable

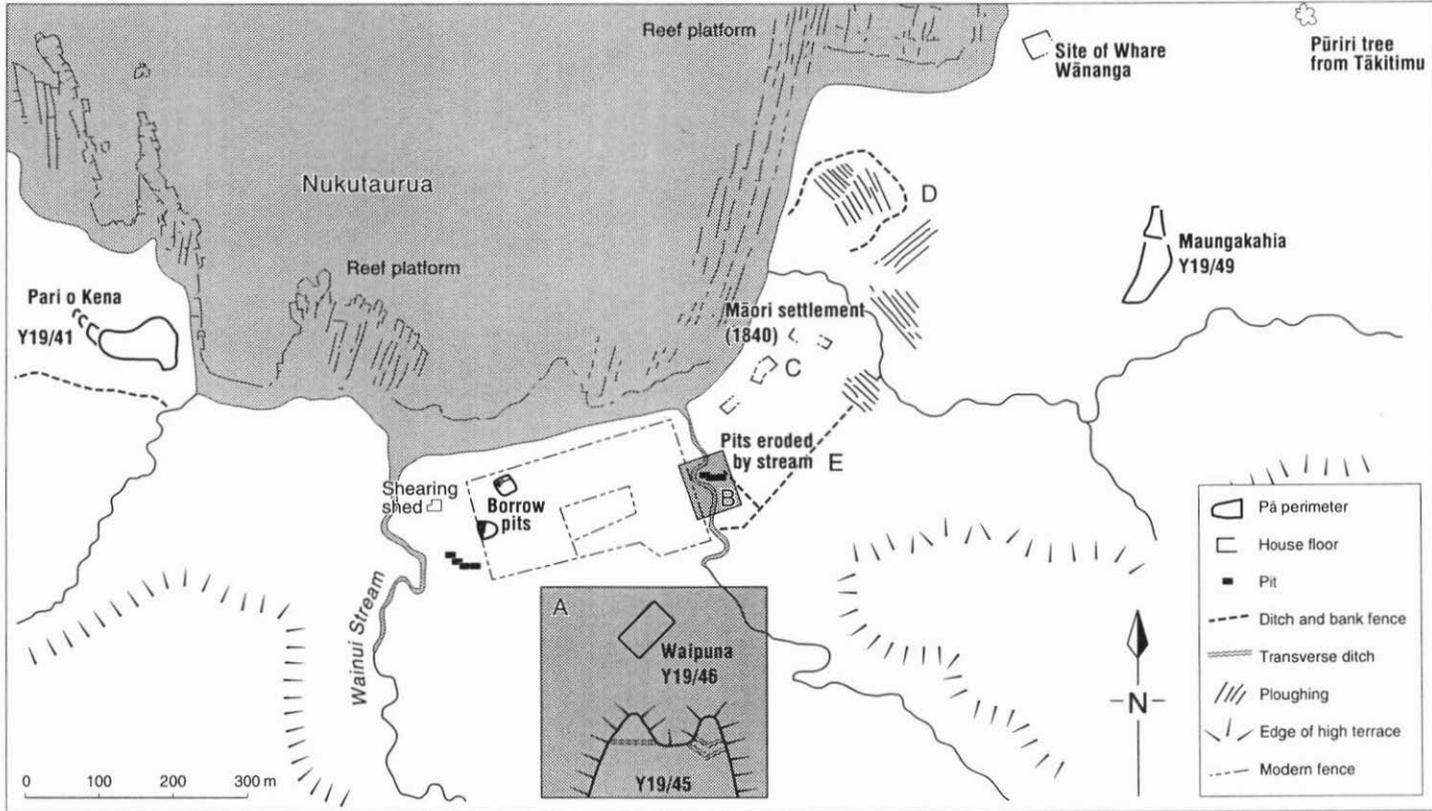


Figure 4: Plan of Nukutaurua vicinity, based on vertical aerial photograph. Detail A is Fig. 5. Detail B is Fig. 10.

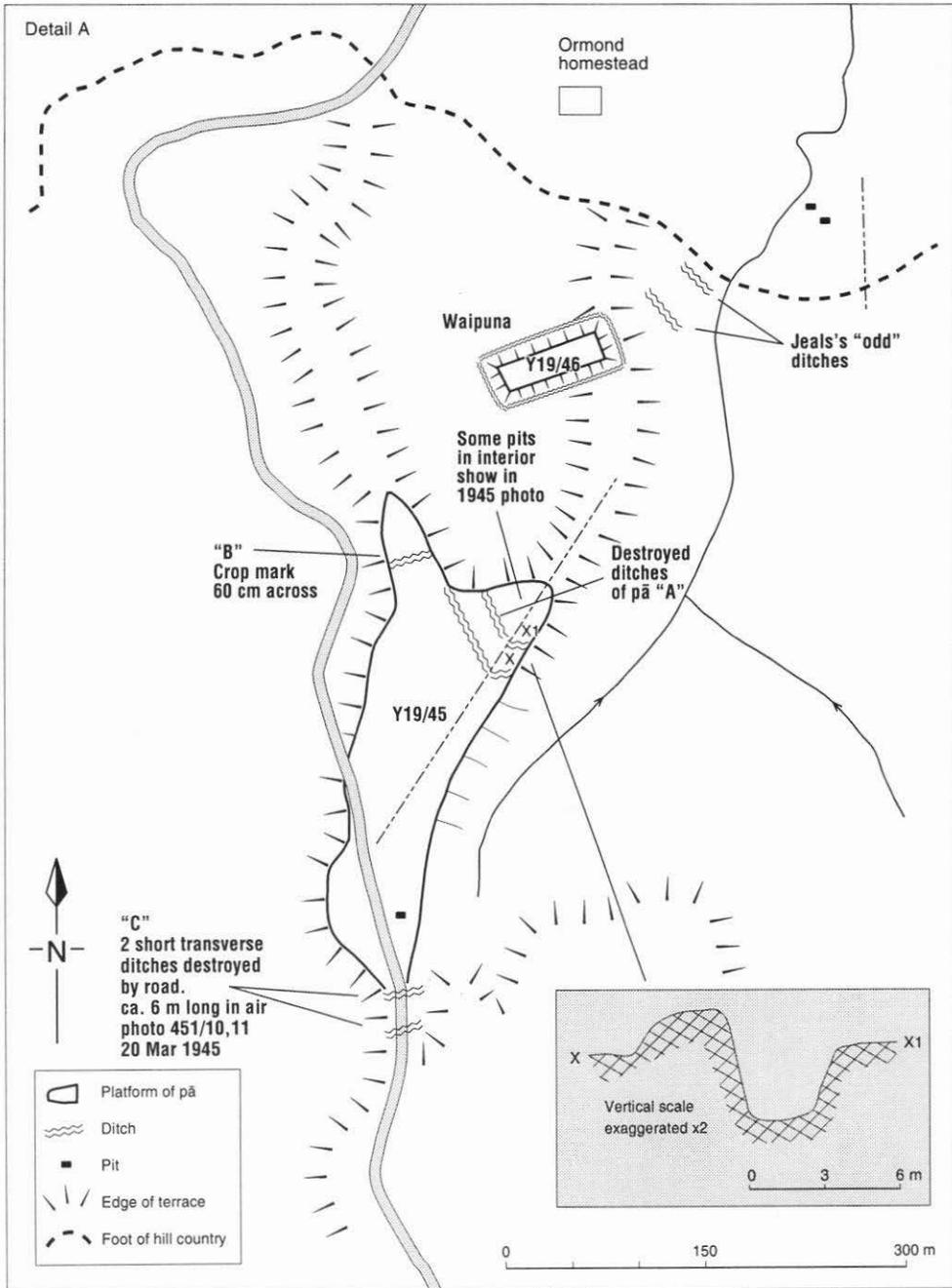


Figure 5: Waipuna pā complex (Y19/45, 46), Nukutaurua (detail A in Fig. 4).

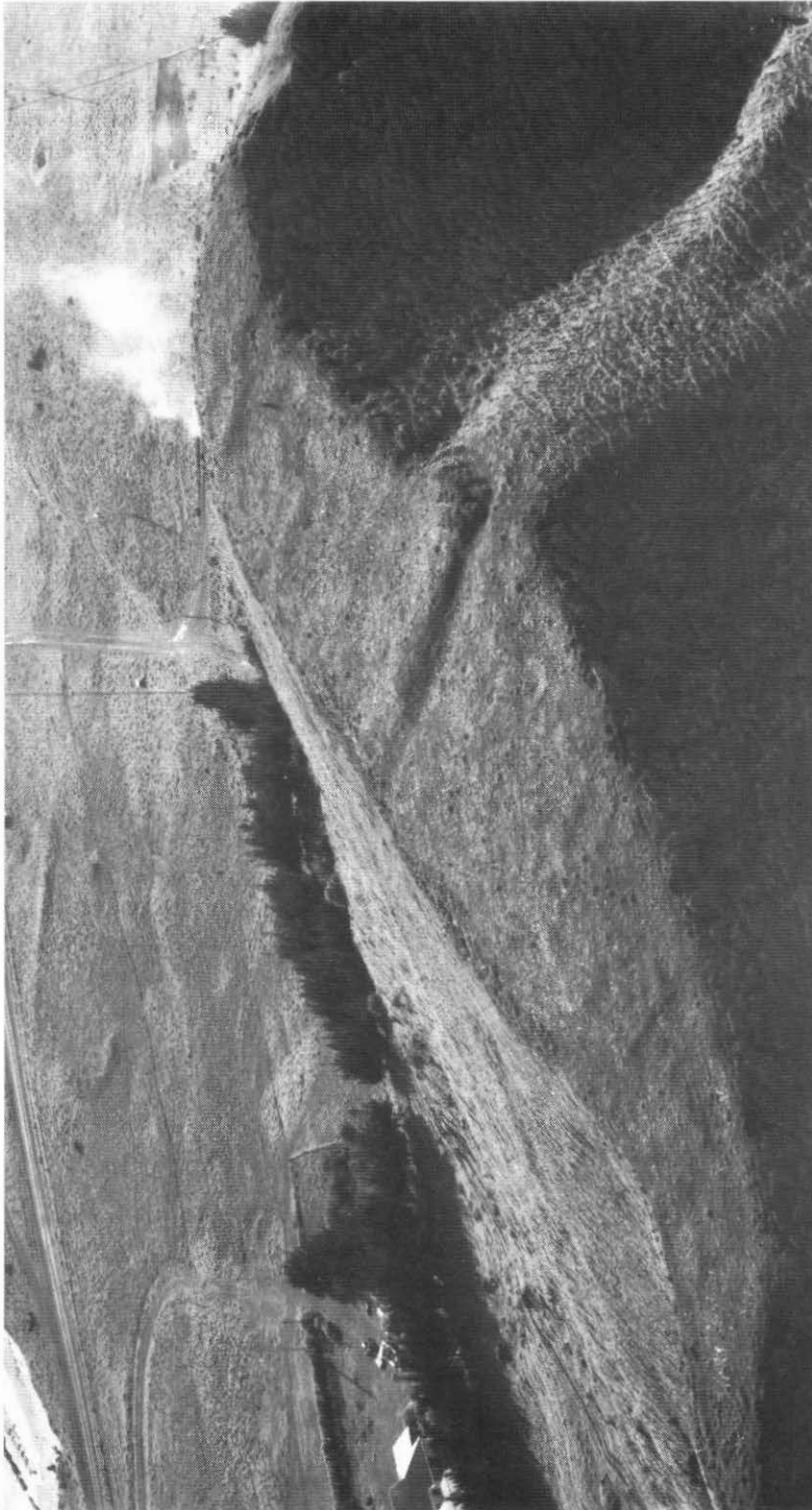


Figure 6: Oblique aerial photograph of Maungakāhia (Y19/49) from the south (July 1992).

compound pā sites of the East Cape region, not unlike some of the compound pā on ridges in the Bay of Plenty. Its present condition makes the true disposition of its features difficult to interpret.

Maungakāhia (Y19/49; N117/36) is one of the pā of Kahungūnu, the eponymous ancestor of Ngāti Kahungūnu. He was placed under attack here by Tūtāmure (Rimini 1892; see Lambert 1925: 213, 283–86; Ruatapu 1993: 151–52). The pā lies on an elongated, isolated remnant of the high terrace at about 80 m above sea level. As recorded on the site record and from aerial photographs (Fig. 6), the main platform of the pā is some 180 m long, with an average width of some 35 m (0.6 ha). Mitchell (1944: 64, 80–82) published a photograph of Maungakāhia and quoted Hare Hongi: “Landward, I could see that the pā was a detached fragment of terrace, which stretched away uniformly... The pā summit, long and narrow, is very nearly level... its area was nearly an acre and a half.” The modern record shows pits and terraces on the lower, narrower parts of the ridges leading up to the platform. The main platform itself is divided into two more or less equal parts by an internal, natural, transverse scarp. This scarp has been further reinforced by a ditch on its lower side, indicating that the slightly higher eastern platform was favoured for final defence. Both platform segments have artificially-steepened perimeter scarps leading down to ditches or narrow lateral terraces at about 6 m below the platform level. The defensive scarping is more or less uniform around the complete perimeter except to the north-west (leaving a weakness of approach, consistent with the eastern platform being favoured for defence) and the south-west, where a short section of the slope is very steep.

TABLE CAPE PĀ

As recorded, and as seen in the recent oblique aerial photograph (Fig. 7), the pā (Y19/57; N117/44) forms a rectangular enclosure of the broad point on the high terrace above Table Cape. This site lies at 140 m above sea level on a slumped strip of high terrace, heavily dissected and eroded. The area on which the pā lies is nearly level. At the head of the gentle north slope there is a ditch and bank which turns to become a transverse ditch and bank. There are a number of discrete pits within the defended area. The area enclosed is about 1200 m².

Of Table Cape Monkhouse wrote:

We were now off a high table land (which C.C. [Captain Cook] called C. Table) on the North side of which was a fortification consisting of very high piquetting and we observed a ditch on one side — part of this piquetting seemed to be strengthened by a cross rail fixt nigh the head. From this Cape to an Island now called Portland the distance is about five leagues. In this interval we saw several patches of Cultivation — a fortification or *Heppa* on the face of a hill and a few stragling Huts upon the flat — this Part of the Country looked very well — was part of a large Peninsula joined to the main by an exceeding narrow neck. (Beaglehole 1955: 575)

The pā was noted not only by Monkhouse but also by Spoering (David *et al.* 1988: 189, Fig. 1.188). In Spoering’s drawing (Fig. 8), the pā and Monkhouse’s “stragling huts” show clearly. The pā is shown as a distinctly rectangular palisaded enclosure. A large cloud of smoke issues from it. On the near end, a large house appears to be enclosed in or showing through the palisade. Towards the bottom of a small valley below and north-west of the pā, seven or eight huts or storage pit roofs can be detected (Fig. 8 lower). They lie together within the hint of an enclosure just above the coastal flat.



Figure 7: Oblique aerial photograph of the pā at Table Cape (Y19/57) from the south-west (July 1992)

The ^{14}C date for midden (AD 1550–1700, NZ 6679) was from the Layer 2 original topsoil under the Layer 1 bank fill exposed on the easternmost end of the ditch and bank (Table 1). It gives a maximum age for the construction of the ditch and bank and by inference the pā. It would appear to have been occupied intermittently from about AD 1500 to about AD 1800. The range indicates re-building of the pā over a period of some 350 years.

In the same vicinity Banks (Beaglehole 1962 (2): 407–9) saw two places with such rails and picketting, of which this must be one, although he did not interpret them as fortifications. As our observations show, the Table Cape pā is best interpreted as a fortification enclosing

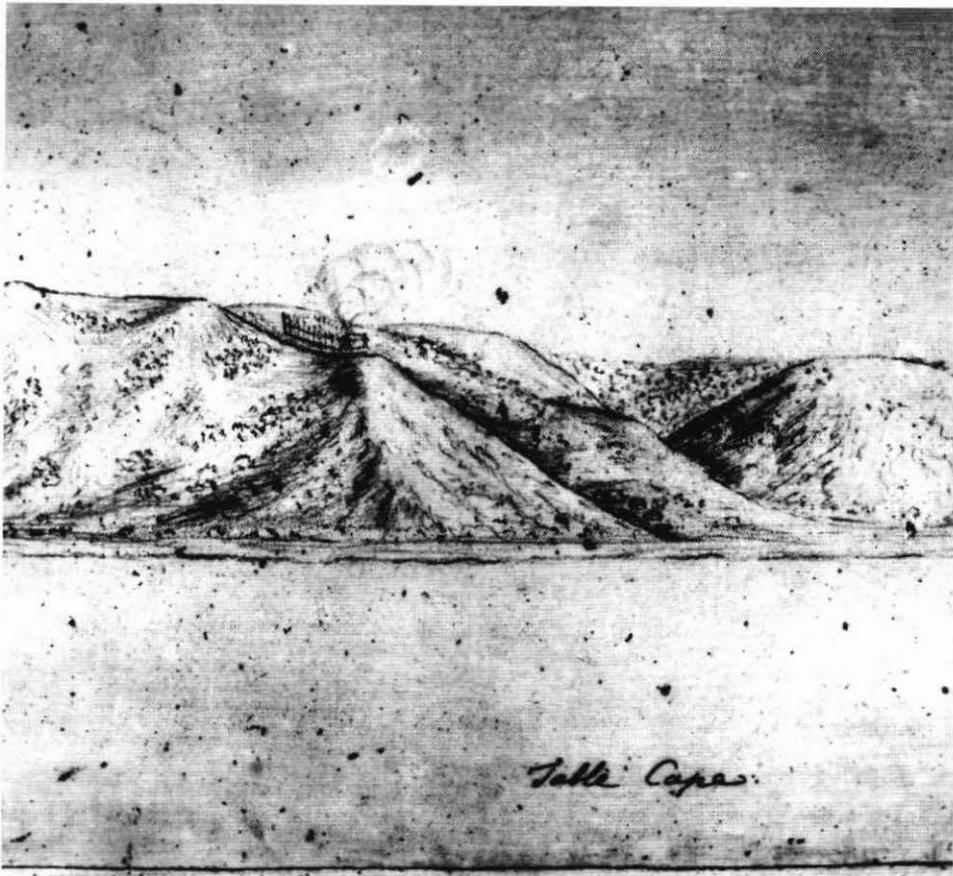
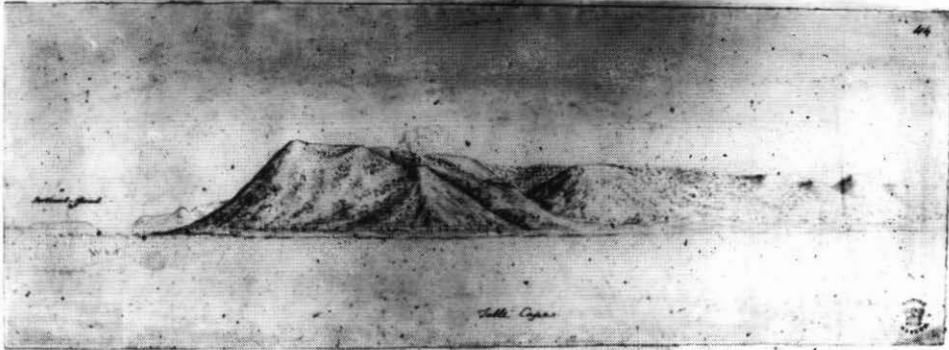


Figure 8: Upper: Spoering's 1769 sketch showing the pā at Table Cape (Y19/57). Lower: detail of the pā. (Print courtesy of British Library Add MS 15507 f. 44.)

a narrow ridge end, which Banks would not have been able to descry. Monkhouse's 1769 account is one of the first detailed descriptions of pā on the East Coast. The others are at Poverty Bay; on Mōtūoroī off Anaura Bay; and at Cook's Cove, Tolaga Bay (Jones 1983). These accounts suggest relatively small settlements or strongpoints near settlements at strategic places such as off-shore islands or prominent points. These pā depended on natural steep slopes or cliffs and had small trenches and apparently lightweight palisades. In 1826–1827, Dumont D'Urville (1950: 114) noted palisades on Portland Island.

Y19/66 (N117/58)

This is one of the largest and most complex of the pā on the peninsula. It lies on the north-eastern end of the hill country, overlooking but not immediately adjacent to the ocean entrance to the Maungawhio lagoon. The high terrace country here is dissected, with rounded ridges. The site lies at 100 m above sea level. This site shows poorly in vertical aerial photograph R.N. 450/12, 13, 1945. Oblique photographs suggest an open settlement to which defences have been added (Fig. 9). The defended area has two main platforms. The inner platform has a double ditch rising by a scarp to a small platform at the highest part. This inner section descends by terraces to the north-west to a small transverse ditch and bank. The second, outer, defended area to the south-east has a central high point with no defined features, descending to a saddle with an exterior ditch and bank south of the saddle.

NINETEENTH-CENTURY SITES

In the 1830s, Ngā Puhī and Tūhoe applied pressure on Ngāti Kahungūnu from the north and north-west, while Ngāti Raukawa had displaced Ngāti Kahungūnu from the southern Wairarapa and southern Heretaunga (Smith 1910: 327). This resulted in Māhia becoming an important place of refuge. Two major sites represent this change.

KAIUKU

According to Smith (1910: 328), Kaiuku was the site of fighting between Ngāti Kahungūnu and Te Urewera forces in 1824. Lambert (1936: 183–85), on the other hand, has Te Wera (of Ngā Puhī) besieged with Ngāti Kahungūnu and defending the site against Te Arawa and Ngatimarū. Walker (1997: 79) has a force of Te Arawa, Waikato, Hauraki, and Ngāti Tuwharetoa attacking the pā. (Ngatimarū and Hauraki would today be referred to as among the Marutuahu confederation.) Crosby (1999: 197) suggests that Ngāti Tuwharetoa were the leaders of the combined taua (war party) of several central North Island tribes, which had set out to exact revenge on Te Wera and Ngā Puhī. He places the event in 1828.

'Kaiuku' refers to the starved defenders eating clay, one of the famous incidents of the siege. Best (1975: 163) attributes the 'Kai-uku' incident to a pā called Puke-karoro, as the place had been re-named after the incident.

The pā (Y19/36; N117/23) lies on the edge of an island of high terrace towards the north-east of the peninsula (see Lambert 1925: 325–26). Lambert's (1925: 321) description is imprecise, stating that it is "situated to the south of the strip of beach dividing the peninsula from the mainland", but it seems likely that the site recorded as Y19/36 is indeed the site of

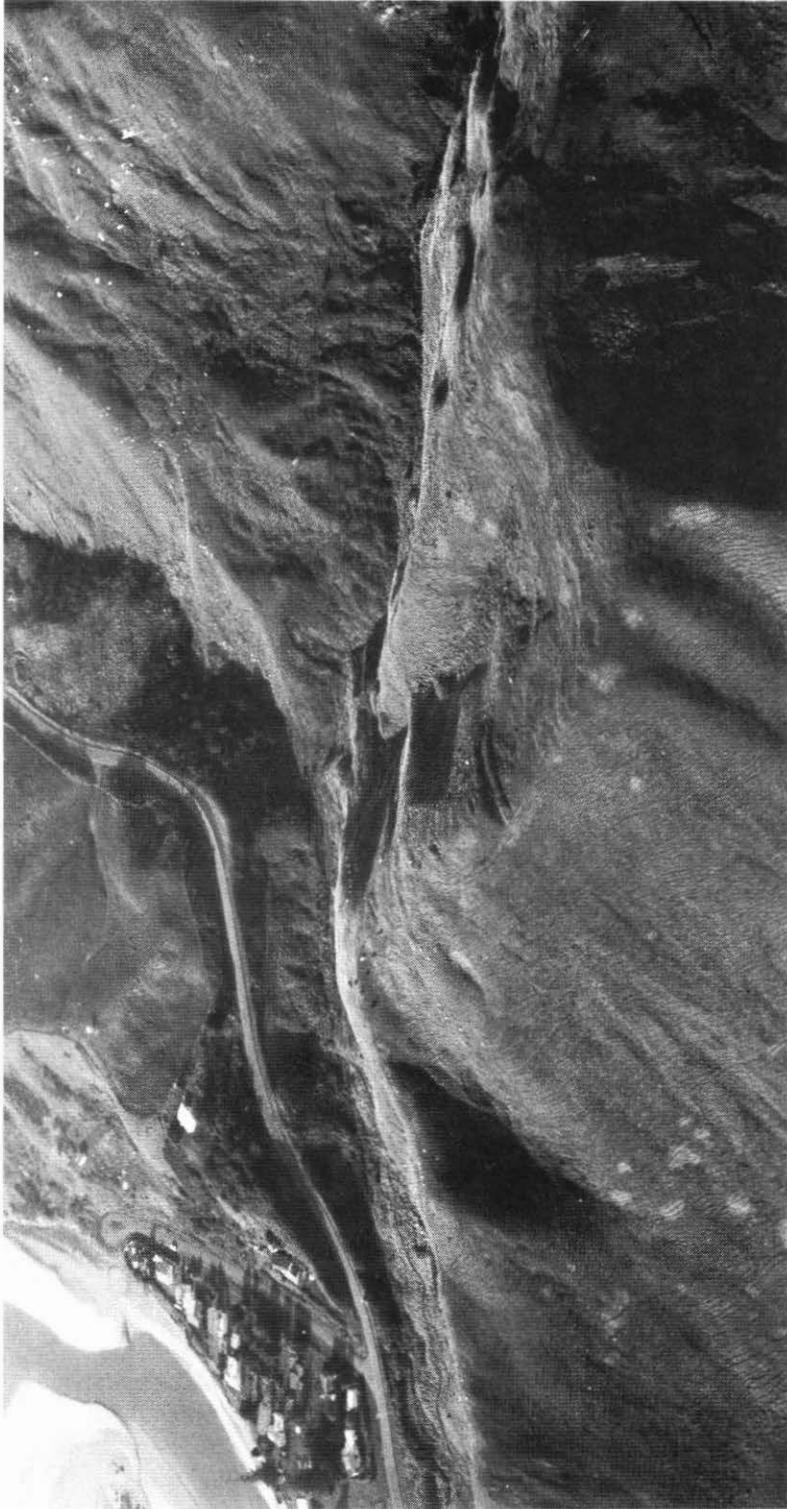


Figure 9: Oblique aerial photograph of Y19/66 from the north-west (July 1992).

the action of 1824 or 1828. The site comprises a dog-leg enclosure of part of the cliff edge. In aerial photographs (R.N. 451/8-9, 20/3/45), this dog-leg shows partly as a relief mark of ditch and bank and partly as a crop- or parch-mark of ditch and bank. The bank parallel to the cliff edge runs to a narrow, terraced point at the southern end of the high-terrace island. The ditch and bank enclosed an area 30 m wide and 180 m along the cliff edge. This layout and the rather large area are consistent with attribution of the site to the 1820s (compare Rua a Rehua in Jones 1994: frontispiece; Golson 1957: 96). To the south-west of the defensive enclosure was a banked depression, square in plan (45 m by 45 m) with one side open, possibly the site of a wharenuī (large house or meeting house), and not dissimilar to the examples at Nukutaurua.

The modern Kaiuku marae is one kilometre to the south-east.

PITS/DITCH-AND-BANK FENCES AT NUKUTAURUA

Te Wera, of Ngā Puhi, may have settled at Nukutaurua in the mid-1830s after the fighting at Te Toka a Kuku, occupying the place with the many Ngāti Kahungūnu who had been driven from the Heretaunga Plains. "So the tribes of Ngāti-Kahungūnu dwelt at Nukutaurua, Te Wera being the fence, holding authority to guard them" (Lambert 1925: 304-5, 1936: 183).

In 1848 the Nukutaurua locality was the site of the "principal village on Table Cape" (Williams 1974: 479). The reference to Table Cape as a locality suggests Williams means the locality of Nukutaurua rather than the peninsula as a whole. Williams mentions a chapel there in 1847 (Williams 1974: 415). He also took classes and conducted confirmations there on February 4, 1852, indicating that it was an important church centre. The Rev. James Hamlin, in charge of the Methodist mission at Wairoa, visited Nukutaurua on several occasions (Hamlin, Letters and Journals, 14-15 March 1845, June 16 1845, February 3 1852).

On the coastal strip at Nukutaurua, raised-rim storage pits, borrow pits, plough marks and several ditch-and-bank fence enclosures (Y19/48) indicate a long period of Māori horticulture and nineteenth-century arable farming (Fig. 10, detail B on Fig. 4). In the first half of the nineteenth century, ditch-and-bank fences were a part of Māori settlements. From the 1870s, ditch-and-bank fences appear to have been constructed on the Māhia Peninsula to enclose or exclude stock from large areas of the coast. A fine example some 3 km in length encloses Auroa Point (inland from Pari o Kena). On the flat at Nukutaurua are three very well preserved examples (aerial photographs R.N. 451/10,11; 20/3/45) (Fig. 4). Most of the sites survive today and they show particularly clearly on the two series of aerial photographs taken in 1938 and 1945. Are they of Māori origin from the time of the 1830s-1840s settlement here or are they later pastoralists' installations?

The coastal strip is some 200-300 m in width and has a slight, north-facing slope. Where streams, seasonal or permanent, come down on to the strip from the high terrace, small conical fans are formed. On these fans and the coastal terrace levels are a number of archaeological features. Figure 4 shows a cluster of at least six raised-rim pits east of Wainui Stream. There were other similar raised-rim pits in smaller numbers beside another stream (Fig. 10, detail B in Fig. 4). To the east was a ditch and bank enclosure (external ditch) (D in Fig. 4) of irregular shape in plan but approximately one hectare in area. A further compound enclosure consisting of a long ditch and bank (with external ditch) (E in Fig. 4) lies between

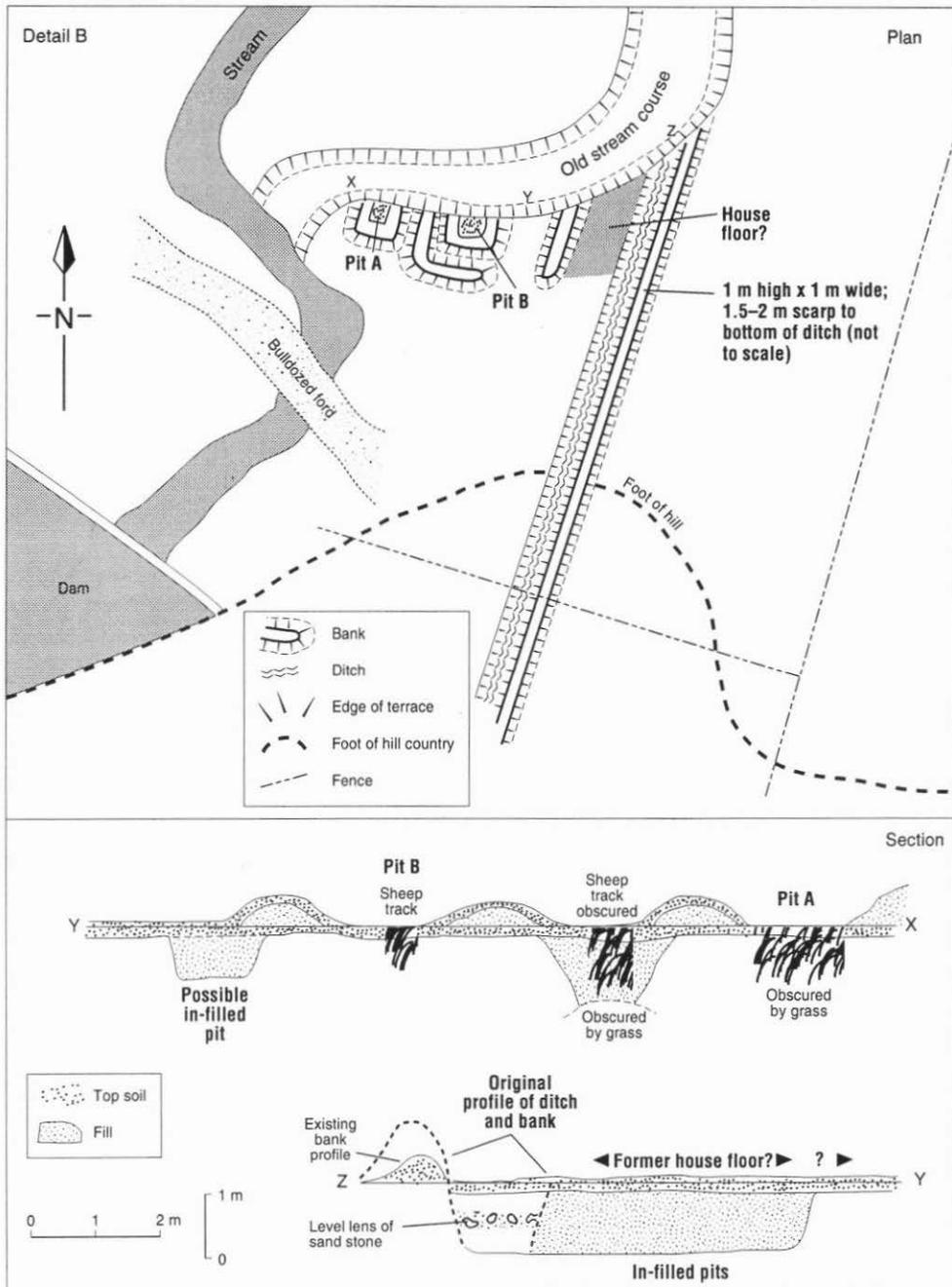


Figure 10: Pits, ditch, and part of the ditch-and-bank fence complex at Nukutaurua (detail B in Fig. 4).

the two steep-sided and entrenched streams. This ditch and bank was 320 metres long and the total area enclosed was some five hectares. There was a further length of ditch and bank subdividing this area. The aerial photograph evidence for ploughing over a large proportion of the area within the perimeter is obvious (see Jones 1994: 253–55). Also within the enclosed area but not ploughed were at least two, and possibly more, raised-bank house-floors (C in Fig. 4). One was 22 x 14 m in plan, the other 11 x 9 m. These are large compared with raised-bank house-floors known elsewhere by the authors.

The exact function of the ditch and bank enclosures and the age of the pre-European or early nineteenth-century pits and house-floors within them are difficult to ascertain. The house-floors and pits may pre-date the construction of the ditches and banks. In this case, the ditches and banks would have been constructed on the ruins of the village and designed to keep sheep out of arable fields (or to keep sheep in for purposes of yarding), in the period after 1870. Alternatively, the house-floors may be part of a very large early nineteenth-century settlement, in which case the ditches and banks would be a settlement perimeter, designed to keep pigs out. The latter interpretation is supported by references to a settlement here in the 1840s (Williams 1974: 479). Williams' (1974: 415) mention of a chapel provides a plausible function for the large, rectangular raised-bank depressions (C in Fig. 4). Very large settlements are a common feature of descriptions of *pā* in the 1840s.

By July 1992, the pits (B in Fig. 4, Fig. 10) and ditch-and-bank fence had been eroded by the stream. (The stream had been diverted away from the site in the course of breaking down its steep banks to create a ford.) The former stream cutting had exposed a section from which the relationship between the pits, an obscured house-floor rim (not previously recorded) and the ditch and bank fence could be determined. If the pits had been cut by the ditch and bank fence, then they would be of an earlier age than the fence. The section near the ditch and bank fence showed the following:

- a group of pits earlier than the fence had been filled in
- a house-floor had been constructed over the filled-in pits but before the ditch and bank
- the ditch of the ditch-and-bank fence had been cut into the filling of these earlier pits.

Therefore, as early as the 1840s, the pits and house-floor in Figure 10 had been abandoned and a ditch and bank fence constructed. Other evidence suggests that the pits are earlier than the fences. The areas enclosed by the fences are too large for any conceivable Māori nineteenth-century settlement. Also, despite the ploughing, more than just the two or three large houses should show if there had been a village here. On balance, the wider Nukutaurua ditch-and-bank fence site should be regarded as a field enclosure of the 1870s, the period of the first establishment of large sheep stations, rather than an early nineteenth-century village enclosure. Coincidentally, it probably does enclose the site of Nukutaurua, of which the large house-floors may be part.

CONCLUSIONS

Most of the settlement of the Māhia Peninsula is on its north-eastern side where the coastal strip is broad and backed by fairly level, high terracelands. Horticulture was probably carried out on both the coastal strip and the edges of the high terracelands, where there was abundant light soil. There is a considerable number of storage pits in and adjacent to pā on the high terrace. There was little or no settlement on much of the south-western aspect of the peninsula.

Although there are ridge pā on the peninsula, the Māhia Peninsula is more notable for the numbers of pā with simple ditch and bank perimeter defences enclosing the natural scarp edge of the high terracelands. These features may be simply functional within the environmental setting of terracelands but they may also indicate a wider stylistic affinity with other districts of the eastern region such as Wairoa or Tolaga Bay. Some pā may have been formerly open settlements. The age of the pā may range from the sixteenth century for the defences of the pā at Table Cape, a site also noted by the *Endeavour* in 1769.

On the basis of fauna, such as seals and moa, found in middens, the first settlement seems likely to have been early in the New Zealand sequence, although nothing is dated. Radiocarbon dates confirm later settlement from the early sixteenth century at localities around the coast. There are probably still remnants of the banked depressions of large houses or churches of the early nineteenth-century settlement at the Nukutaurua locality. This settlement coincidentally lies within the bounds of a later ditch-and-bank fence field enclosure.

Future research objectives on the Māhia Peninsula may rely on the overall picture presented here. Much but not all of the surface-visible archaeology has been recorded, but there are inaccessible areas such as small valleys in the back of dune areas on the south-east aspect of the coast (from Table Cape south) to the Wainuiorangi area where recording is minimal. Further detailed and precise mapping and location of sites could also be pursued. Re-surveys of the dune areas, from Portland Island to the Maungawhio Lagoon, including detailed examination, sampling and dating of exposed sections would be warranted. Excavation of middens with the aim of understanding pre-European use of marine resources, including the use of the shank-barbed fishhook, would be worthwhile. Finally, an improved understanding of the chronology and use of the Nukutaurua raised-rim pits, house-floors and ditch-and-bank fences will greatly illuminate this very important historic landscape area.

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