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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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FIELD SCHOOL IN TARANAKI ARCHAEOLOGY: 2-4 JUNE 1982

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Hamilton

On 1 June, on a Waikato "black-frosty" morning two friends from Tauranga, Rhondda Beddis and Jack Steedman, and I set off for New Plymouth and the Field School in Taranaki archaeology. It was just on dark as we arrived at Camp Huinga, the Y.M.C.A. camp at Mangorei, near the Mangamahoe Power Station, just off State Highway 3, 5 km south of New Plymouth, a pleasant site of 3-4 acres of river flat in grass with a border of trees, mostly native, close to the left bank of the Waiwakaiho River.

Most of the other people attending the school had arrived. We went into the kitchen-dining-meeting hall to be greeted with a most welcome cup of tea, the aroma of dinner cooking, an open fire blazing and several earnest conversations in progress. After the dinner dishes were dealt with, Nigel handed us maps of Taranaki, and showed us slides and talked about the diversity of pa and redoubts in the area, some of which we were to see in the next few days. Those attending the Field School were, Robyn Oliver, Mary Jeal, Ray Hammond, Jack Steedman, Peter Addis, Kelvin Day, Brenda Sewell, Dilys Johns, Raewyn Shepard, Janet Davidson, Debbie Foster, Rhondda Beddis, Margareta Seb-Olsson, Nigel Prickett, Alastair Buist, Christine Barnett, Ros Kay, Roger Fyfe, Phil Moore, Anne Leahy, Anne Geelen and Margaret Cardiff.

The next morning after breakfast, all booted and warm jacketed against the bleak weather, we gathered in front of the kitchen door while Nigel gave brief explanations of where we were going and hand-outs describing some of the sites we were to see that day, before we boarded the two mini-buses. The day was fine with a cold breeze and our day's journey was to the north of New Plymouth. The first stop was at Mataitawa Redoubt site on Elsham Road near Lepperton, 8-9 km inland of Waitara. Adjacent to the pa of the same name, which was part of the refuge for Wiremu Kingi's people fleeing Waitara in 1860, the redoubt was built in 1864, one of several built by Colonel Warre and his troops in the area, after Maori villages had been abandoned or captured. Set on the edge of the high land overlooking a wide area to the north, and at the then bush fringe, Mataitawa was at the northern end of the old Whakaahurangi Track that ran south on the inland side of the mountain known variously as Egmont, Taranaki, Pukehaupapa and Pukeonaki. The site is now in a grassed paddock, ploughed almost to obscurity, so that it requires an expert's eye to point it out. It was hard to imagine that these slight humps were once battlements and buildings. Back into the

buses our next stop was Pukerangiora and Te Arei Redoubt site. Set on a cliff high above the Waitara River, the pa was the scene of many conflicts between Te Atiawa and other tribes, principally Waikato. The later European redoubt dated from 1864.

We made our way back to the coast and the main road north, stopping to look at Te Mataiwetu, a small pa just north of the road, one of many visited by Te Rauparaha, but this one notable for having been endangered by and subsequently protected by the Motunui Petrocorp scheme. To view it we were conducted through the grounds by a security officer, who at first didn't give us the impression that he welcomed photographers. Sorry Roger, if we seemed less interested in the little swamp-edge pa and its neighbouring coastal Te Taniwha pa and urupa that you worked so hard at preserving, than the enormity of the great project that threatened it. The awesome spectacle of 198 ha of prime flat farmland torn asunder with great pits dug and high hills of topsoil piled up by dozens of machines, was a very sobering sight.

At our next stop we visited the twin pa of Puketapu and Puke-miro, hiding under bush cover right along side the main highway and the Onaero camping ground. There is an exceptionally large trench - or rather two with a narrow fosse-way between them on the seaward end of Puketapu. There are several pits on these pa some of which were explored by the keener types. One that Richard Cassels climbed into had a fairly recently demised occupant which we were surprised to find was a blue penguin, for although only a few hundred metres from the coast, the pits are well up on the steep sided pa.

Our lunch stop was at Urenui where a householder kindly offered to lend us her tea making facilities. We sat on her front lawn in the weak winter sunshine enjoying the view of the Urenui River mouth reserve. Dr Alastair Buist joined us there, after his morning surgery at Hawera and showed us over the adjacent Kumara-Kaiamo site and described the excavations he did there in 1962. From there most of us walked down the hill, across the swing bridge over the Urenui River, and past the cairn marking the birth place to Te Rangihiroa (Peter Buck) on the river bank. Across the golf course was the steep sided pa Urenui, lately being cleared of the macrocarpas on its sides, and being replanted in native shrubs. The top is fenced off and in grass and sheep, with many pits, a couple of which are covered for animal safety.

Back on board the buses and a kilometre or so further north to Okoki which is set back on the inland side of State Highway 3 with large concrete stylized canoe prow protruding from the bush covered

fortified hill. There are two platforms, the smaller one to the east is an urupa but the larger one has many storage pits on it. It seemed that Phil Moore, Brenda Sewell, Rhondda Beddis and Dilys Johns in particular were only visible from the neck up or the knees down, depending from which angle they were viewing the interiors. Okoki was the scene of several battles, the most remembered in 1822 when Te Rauparaha was in temporary residence on his way back to Kapiti and he tricked a Waikato force into the Mangatihi creek valley in front of the pa, slaying a great many warriors who were on their way to relieve the besieged Waikato force at Pukerangiora. I was the last of our group to leave Okoki that day and I paused at Sir Peter and Lady Buck's tomb as I left. Sometime between then and the following Saturday the tomb was broken into and several cloaks and a greenstone mere were stolen.

Wai-iti Redoubt site was our next stop, set on the south bank of a swampy Papatiki Stream. It was built in 1869 after reports that 600 Ngati Maniapoto were advancing on Taranaki, and after Pukearuhe had been abandoned. Wai-iti and its neighbour Papatiki Redoubt guarded Taranaki's northern gateway for about three years. The earthworks are still well defined. It was late in the afternoon as we were leaving this site and starting to get chilly.

And so to our last stop of the day. The low sun had hidden behind distant clouds and the wind was cold coming up the narrow valley of the Waikaramarama creek that separates Pukearuhe pa and redoubt site from the White Cliffs. Set on a 6-7 acre plateau on the cliff edge, 70 m or so above the sea, with the inland end lopped off by the present road, this very old pa is in three main areas, roughly in a crescent shape. The redoubt was built in 1865 on the eastern side of the middle platform, overlooking the track from the beach, which was the main route into Taranaki from the north, after it left the base of the White Cliffs. All that is left of this occupation now is some stone steps and a fire place on the lower and more eastern platform, and two grave stones above the road on the southern end.

While we were there, Mr Wells came over the paddocks to talk to us. He arrived on this farm in 1903 as a 9 month old babe and has lived there ever since. He told us a little of the local history, including how he found the long lost precious adze, named Poutama Whiria, now in the Taranaki Museum. Most interesting to me was the recently revealed tradition and accompanying waiata concerning Whiteley's death. It has always been a mystery why such an apparently well loved man as he, was murdered. In 1869 as the war between various Maori tribes and the British was not being resolved, several chiefs and tohunga met and decided that a sacrifice would have to be made, before peace could be established, and it had to be

someone loved and admired by both sides. The deed was planned and the Reverend John Whiteley was chosen eight months before it was carried out on the 13 February 1869. It was 110 years before any member of the sacrifice-offering tribes set foot on Pukearuhe again.

That evening Alastair, who had dinner with us, showed us his slides of the excavations he did at Kumara-Kaiamo, Kaupokonui and Ohawe.

Thursday morning was cold and blustery for our jaunt to the Omata-Oakura districts to the west of New Plymouth. Omata Stockade site on the other side of the first valley about a kilometre outside the city boundary was our first stop. This small hill is right alongside the road and is now a Lands and Survey Department reserve. Nigel explained the excavation he did on this site a few years ago. The redoubt was designed and built by the local settlers in 1860.

Four or five kilometres away by the present road, but only a couple by the old road, is the site of the Waireka Redoubt and battle. Situated on the corner of the present Waireka Road, that was then the main track, and Sutton Road where there is a cairn marking the site, the outline of the redoubt is still quite well defined in the often-ploughed paddock.

From here we headed for the marvellous pa, Koru, inland of the township of Oakura. This ancient pa is on a hill in the valley on a hairpin bend of the Oakura River, from which it gets its name - Koru meaning loop or bend. Now a reserve, it is bush covered, consists of eight or nine platforms and rises 24 m above the river on the high side. Its distinction is in its stone faced banks, many of them quite high. Nigel and Roger told us a little of its history. According to tradition this pa could be 900 years old and was in such a good position and so well fortified that it wasn't taken before 1800-1805 when two sub tribes of Te Atiawa from the Bell Block area overran it defeating the Mahanga-Taiire people.

After lunch we visited the great pa, Manawapo at Tataraimaka before going on a few kilometres further around the mountain and down towards the coast where three small pa, typical of the many in the area, all had the usual bulldozed farm track along one side utilising the trench. Two of them had a few trees on them, and we were asked our thoughts on conservation - trees to be left or removed. They are all on ridges alongside or near the Katikara stream, the first one, Pouteau, is divided into three by deep trenches, each level being only slightly lower than the previous

one. While we were on the second and third pa which are on the same ridge, Kelvin Day and Peter Adds went to investigate fresh bulldozing near a pa on the other side of the stream and found that work with a machine had destroyed a corner of the site which saddened us.

A kilometre or so down the road (Lower Pitone) brought us to the site of the St. George's Redoubt, separated by the old coach road from the strong pa, Tataraimaka, it was the post from which a large force of General Cameron's troops attacked a strongly entrenched party of Taranaki, Nga Rauru, Ngati Ruanui and Whanganui warriors in 1863 at the battle of Katikara. The graves of some of the victims are on the side of this hill.

Persistent and sometimes deafening rain all night on our tin roofs made it hard to rise for the start of another long day. The programme was reduced despite Kelvin's assurance that it wasn't raining "down the coast" - yet. We set off later than originally planned, collecting Aileen Fox, Anne Geelen, Roy Davis and Robyn on the way. Just over the Hangatahua (Stoney River) bridge we looked at the carved rock by the road side. Unfortunately the rain had formed a muddy puddle hiding part of it. Those of us who hadn't seen the pa Ngaweka braved the cold heavy rain and trekked the mile or so up the paddock over several electric fences. Ngaweka is a twin hilled pa that is distinctive as one of the few places that the Taranaki Maoris were able to defeat invading forces from the northern tribes in the early years of the last century.

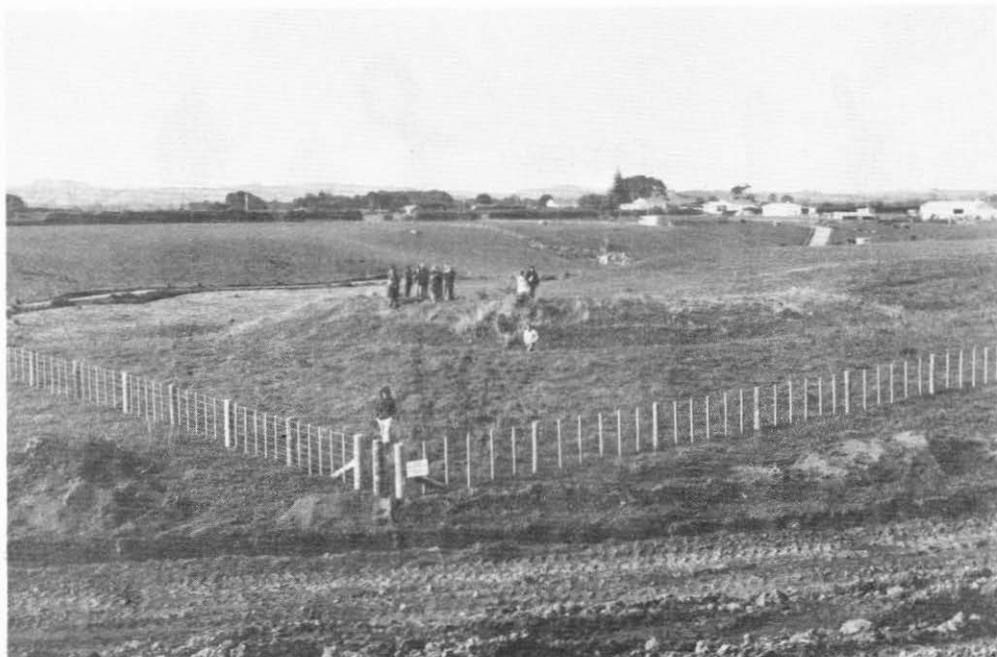
After seeing a petroglyph at Pungarehu and having lunch at Opunake we went on to Kaupokonui Beach where Alastair was awaiting us in the basin of terraced river flat behind coastal cliffs above a good wide stream crossed by a substantial foot bridge to sand hills. A most interesting hour was spent in the sand hills and we mere mortals pestered our more informed companions with "what is this bone" and "which sort of stone is this". Many photos were taken of the site, particularly the areas in which Richard and Alastair had done their excavations. There was so much of interest here that it was with great reluctance many of us made our way back over the bridge. The rain had miraculously held off while we were at Kaupokonui, but it came down with a vengeance at Ohawe Beach a few kilometres further south.

Also set in a basin, the far side of which is formed by sheer cliffs rising from the curve of the Waingongoro River with the remains of the pa of the same name above it. One enters this basin past the inland side of the old pa, Ohawe, and between these two pa was the site of a third, close to the left bank of the

river, which has been destroyed in recent years. The rain was relentless as Alastair showed us the remnants of moa bone and an archaic fireplace in eroding sand under the cliffs of Ohawe and again between the flattened pa Te Rangatapu and the river mouth. By this time not everyone wanted to brave the weather. Although very interesting we were glad to be back in the buses.

Back at camp, those that required transport to town hastily threw their packs and suitcases into the vans and with a chorus of "see you tomorrow" (at the conference), the rest of us raced for warm showers and dry clothes.

Thank you Roger and Nigel for a well worth while few days and to both you and Robyn and Kelvin for safely chauffeuring us and rounding us up when we strayed. Thanks too, to "school" companions for your friendly patience with the new chums.



TARANAKI FIELD SCHOOL. Te Mataiwhehu, a small terrace edge pa at the Motunui Petrocorp site, fenced off for preservation.



KAURI BUSHMEN'S HUT Plate 1. View south across eastern half of excavated site: slot-like footings for corrugated iron chimney (foreground), east wall baulk and outside drain beyond.