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FIVE MANUKAU PA SITES

by Alan Taylor

The sites to be dealt with in the following brief survey will be described as the Manukau Group. They comprise the five pa that lie along the east coast of the Manukau Harbour between Ihumatao Point (NZMS 1, N42 Auckland, 264429) and Andrews Farm (NZMS 1, N42, Auckland, 295462); including at the same time, Weeks Island or Puketutu (NZMS 2A, Titirangi, 269466). In order of their geographic position (from south to north), they are as follows: Ellett's Mount, Ihumatao Mountain, or Maungataketake (NZMS 2A, Manukau, 2695432); Otauataua or Moerangi (NZMS 2A, Manukau, 275444); Pukeiti (little hill) (NZMS 2A, Manukau, 278446); Mount Gabriel or Waitomokia (NZMS 2A, Manurewa, 291452-5) and Puketutu Island.

Description of Sites

Ellett's Mount (249 ft.) is generally considered one of the most impressive pa sites on the Isthmus, with the result that its protection through legislation has been advocated (1). The site's principal earthworks lie along (and some distance below) the eastern section of the cone's rim, and will be affected should any "topping" of the mountain be necessary for the safe operation of the international airport at Mangere.

In regard to these earthworks, field reconnaissance has revealed that they conform in design and general construction to those of other pa sites in the area; that is, the terracing consists of short lines that run from anything between 10 ft. and 120 ft. along the crater rim and sides of the mountain. Like other sites in the Manukau Group, the terracing (the scarps occasionally scoria faced) is broken up by storage pits which number at least twenty on its eastern side alone, while among these are quite a number of depressions that appear to be whare pits and hangi pits.

The pa is surrounded by an extensive lava field that has obviously been cleared for cultivation purposes in parts, particularly the southern lowlands where there are many scoria cairns and rows. In addition quite a number of burial places; coastal whare and storage pits; shell-middens; and a great deal of surface material, such as stone net sinkers, hammerstones, sharpening stones, cores of obsidian, and adzes have been found.

Otauataua (209 ft.) is at present a Manukau County Council quarry reserve; which means that it will be completely destroyed within the next five to ten years. Already a great deal of scoria from the southern side of the hill has been removed and the top-soil stripped from the rest.

During his visit to New Zealand in 1859, the Austrian scientist von Hochstetter went over the site (2) and was not only impressed by its

size and the lava flows which run down to the sea from the breached crater on its western side but also by the earthworks that dominated the pa. Of these, little remains. However, there is other evidence of pre-European occupation, particularly on the western, northern and north-eastern slopes and flats, for here are found large areas cleared for cultivation, occupation and, possibly, defence. Where the ground has been cleared for cultivation purposes, scoria cairns and rows as long as 200 ft. and from 3 ft. to 4ft. high have been set up; while close to these are rectangular and square semi-subterranean pits of varying size.



In those areas that were no doubt set aside for occupation are found square and rectangular pits; the ubiquitous closely packed or loose middens that contain not only pipi and tuangi but such assorted food material as the bones of the native rat and dog as well as bird, seal and human bone, in association with pumice, flakes of obsidian and charcoal.

Also found in these areas are burial caves of which over twenty have been recorded along with a number of surface burials: disarticulated skeletons concealed under rectangular stone cairns on ground level.

There is evidence that certain areas outside the perimeter of the pa were set aside for defensive purposes; particularly along the western coast line. This generally consists of short trenches on ground above bays, inlets and landing places and the levelling of mounds that were fortified by banks built up along the outer rims with scarps occasionally scoria faced.

In regard to artefactual material recovered from the surface of the site, several hammer-stones, fish net and line sinkers, polishing stones and adzes have been found.

Pukeiti, the smallest pa ⁽³⁾ site in the Manukau Group, is 90ft. high and lies about half a mile to the north east of Otautaua. The first cone to be quarried in the area (1928), it is a small, low scoria hill, regular in shape, with a circular, shallow, basin shaped crater just on ten feet deep.

Owing to its small size there is little occupational evidence other than one or two short terraces from 10 ft. to 15 ft. wide in addition to several pits and small shell middens. However, unlike Otautaua and the other three sites in the group, there are a number of burial caves on its northern side of exceptionally large size: the entrance to one being 10ft. high and 18ft. wide.

Other interesting features of the site include a large number of scoria cairns (some as high as 14 ft.) and 3ft.-4ft. high rows on rocky northern flats that have obviously been cleared for cultivation; shell middens varying in size from 3ft - 20ft. in circumference, both packed and loose; hangi pits on cleared ground close to larger rectangular semi-subterranean pits; surface burials; narrow scoria platforms running into tidal flats inside bays; and, finally, several fresh water wells, one of which lies half a mile or so from the pa and is still open.

Artefactual material recovered from the surface of the site includes a small 7in. long, perfectly shaped pounder of totara wood that was found in a shallow rock shelter; a rough scoria line sinker; several sharpening stones and a number of adze blanks and finished adzes.

Mount Gabriel has in recent years been so heavily quarried in the service of the Manukau Drainage Scheme that the suggestion has been made ⁽⁴⁾ that

what remains is not worth preserving. However, one of its remaining cones carries some particularly interesting earthworks: earthworks that impressed von Hochstetter when he visited the site in 1859 and which he described in some detail in his book.⁽⁵⁾

At the time of the Austrian geologist's visit, indeed right up to 1956, the site consisted of a scoria cone, tuff cone, tuff crater and swamp that completely surrounded the pa and formed a natural defence area. Today, all that remains is part of the southern cone and the more or less complete south eastern cone which is almost 100ft. high and carries some terracing, rectangular and square pits, and a well preserved tihi or citadel. In addition to these are a number of large shell-middens from which artefacts have been recovered, among them a number of adzes, in association with human and animal bones — principally dog. The terraces are situated just above the swamp line on the south western side of the pa and along the top northern and north western side; their average width is 12ft. and length 30ft. At a number of places the terrace scarping (from 9ft. to 16ft. high) is faced with 6in. scoria blocks while the semi-subterranean pits vary in size from 11ft. x 11ft. and 4ft. - 5ft. deep to 16ft. x 6ft. and 6ft. - 10ft. deep. More often than not, they are in pairs, with 3ft. - 4ft. baulks separating them. The tihi, or uppermost part of the cone, is approximately 30ft. long and 5ft. wide.

So far, neither burial caves nor surface burials have been found on the site and it is reasonable to assume that the swamp was used for burial purposes.

Finally, there is no definite evidence of cultivation in the area: no scoria cairns or rows.

From this brief consideration of the site it is obvious that a much more definite survey of the pa should be carried out.

Puketutu Island, the last site to be described in the Manukau Group, is an island consisting of a number of volcanic cones notable for their complex of archaeological remains.

In contrast to the destructive quarrying methods adopted by contractors working the Otatauata, Pukeiti and Mt. Gabriel sites, the Auckland Metropolitan Drainage Board has, at the instance of the owner Mr. H.J. Kelliher and in consultation with the Historic Auckland Society, restricted work to areas where the least possible damage can be done to the island's features and appearance.

The principal cone on the island is 263ft. high and carries a series of staggered terraces from 20ft. to 60ft. in length and from 6ft. to 12ft. in width with 11ft. to 40ft. scarps. The semi-subterranean pits which are generally found in pairs on each terrace vary little in size: 12ft. x 8ft. to 15ft. x 9ft. but in depth the differences are considerable.

At the northern base of this peak is a small hill and short spur that have over twenty pits along their terraces and platforms in addition to a large number of shell middens. It is here that more evidence of occupation is to be found than anywhere else on the island.

Almost directly behind the main peak, to the south-west, is a hill with short terraces from 10ft. to 25ft. in width that have, here and there, scoria faced scarps. Pits along these terraces vary little in size and depth: 13ft. x 9ft. and 3ft. deep to 13ft. x 7ft. and 2ft. deep. An interesting feature of this site is the tih which may possibly be artificial. It is 25ft. long, 8ft. wide and 15ft. high. From its base to the edge of the first terrace it is only 10ft. wide on the west side while on its northern it is 35ft. wide.

The gently sloping and, in parts, flat land on the western and north-western side of the island was extensively cultivated as there are many scoria cairns and rows. Like the scoria cairns on the flats below Ellett's Mount and Pukeiti, the cairns on Puketutu range in circumference from 3ft. to 20ft. with equally definite differences in height: 3ft. to 8ft.

The scoria rows on the site generally follow the contour of the coast and consequently may perhaps have been utilised for defensive purposes; particularly those along the north-western coast line, for here they are set out in three distinct zig-zag lines, close to a small bay, that nearest the coast being shorter than next and both being much shorter than the third. On average they are 10ft. wide and 4ft. high, with occasional breaches averaging 9ft. in width.

Another interesting structure on this north-western side of the island is a retaining wall 6ft. wide and 2ft. high that follows the contour of a creek at the head of which is a small, well formed, isolated circle of scoria blocks 6ft. in circumference and 18in. high which may be of religious significance.

Immediately on the western coast, just above sea level on naturally rocky ground, are a number of enclosures formed of single blocks of scoria. These, like the scoria cairns, vary in size but a good average structure is 10ft. x 11ft. with a 4ft. breach in the centre of the short line.

Several burial caves have been found along the northern and western coast containing disarticulated skeletons covered with blocks of scoria, humus and occasionally, shell.

Little artefactual material has been recovered from Puketutu Island beyond a number of adzes.

Conclusion

In this brief survey of the Manukau Group of pa I have only broadly

dealt with the principal features of the sites and the artefactual material recovered from them and consequently it should not be considered a full report. However, it is hoped that a more comprehensive survey will be carried out in the near future.

References

- (1) Auckland's Volcanic Cones. Historic Auckland Society, 1957.
- (2) Geology of New Zealand (von Hochstetter). Government Printer, 1959, p. 204.
- (3) Loc.cit.
- (4) Auckland's Volcanic Cones, p.28.
- (5) von Hochstetter. pp.202-203

Notes on Artefacts from the Manukau Pa

by J. Golson

Mr. Taylor has been good enough to let me look at artefactual material he has personally collected on the sites he has described, or has sought out in the possession of local residents.

None of this material has been excavated, except by bulldozers, yet it forms a valuable little collection because the pieces submitted are precisely localised: not that is, merely to a general area, but to the very find spot. This is obviously a matter of considerable importance where the aim is to discover the artefactual fashions of the pa builders, and Mr. Taylor's care in this regard is to be commended to other fieldworkers.

I propose here to deal only with adzes as being culturally the most diagnostic of the material submitted (sinkers, hammerstones, etc.). They total 8, of which 2 are from Mt. Gabriel, 2 from Otautaua, and the remainder, 3 unfortunately broken and the fourth unfinished, from Pukeiti.

The Mt. Gabriel adzes are in terms of present adze typology both 2B: that is they are quadrangular in cross-section and lack a grip. Though they are markedly different in stone and size (5½ in. and 13½ in. long), they possess in common the features of thinness in respect of width (thickness