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FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS AT PARI WHAKATAU,
SOUTHERN MARLBOROUGH.

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ABSTRACT : Results of investigations at Pari Whakatau pa in southern Marlborough in 1962 are briefly described and discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Excavations of three large pits in a complex of eighteen (site S55/7) at Claverley in southern Marlborough which were commenced by Robert Bell and Roger Duff in 1955 and continued intermittently until 1960, were described by the latter in 1961. In brief, Duff found that post holes and other evidence pointed to these pits being the remains of dwellings, and used Maori traditions to identify the site as a Ngatimamoe pa called Pari Whakatau occupied about A.D. 1650.

In 1962 a Canterbury Museum team, under the direction of Tony Fomison, carried out further investigations to obtain information on other aspects of the site. In particular it was hoped to determine whether or not the site had been protected by a defensive palisade.

1962 INVESTIGATIONS

In May 1962 investigations were commenced with a new plane table survey of the site and surrounding topography. The main portion of this, amended according to my own observations, is shown in Figure 1. A small area excavation was then made on the edge of the lower terrace, on which there were pits, to look for signs of palisading which was assumed to have surmounted the perimeter slope. This excavation was positioned at a point where the slope was such that soil movements would have been minimal and so that any relationship between the defenses and the pits could (hopefully) be defined (see Figure 1). Because the gradient is less steep here than elsewhere round the terrace edge, it is where access was usually gained by the investigators themselves and by visitors to the site.

Fomison was to some extent a follower of the text book methods of Mortimer Wheeler and his field books contain detailed discussion on why particular excavation and recording methods were adopted or modified to suit the local situation. However, when it was discovered in a control excavation that post holes (now filled in with stained soil) showed up in vertical section more clearly than when "peeling off" horizontal layers, a vertical face was driven uphill across the excavation. Because the tops of the post holes were not always clearly distinguishable from the soil into which they had

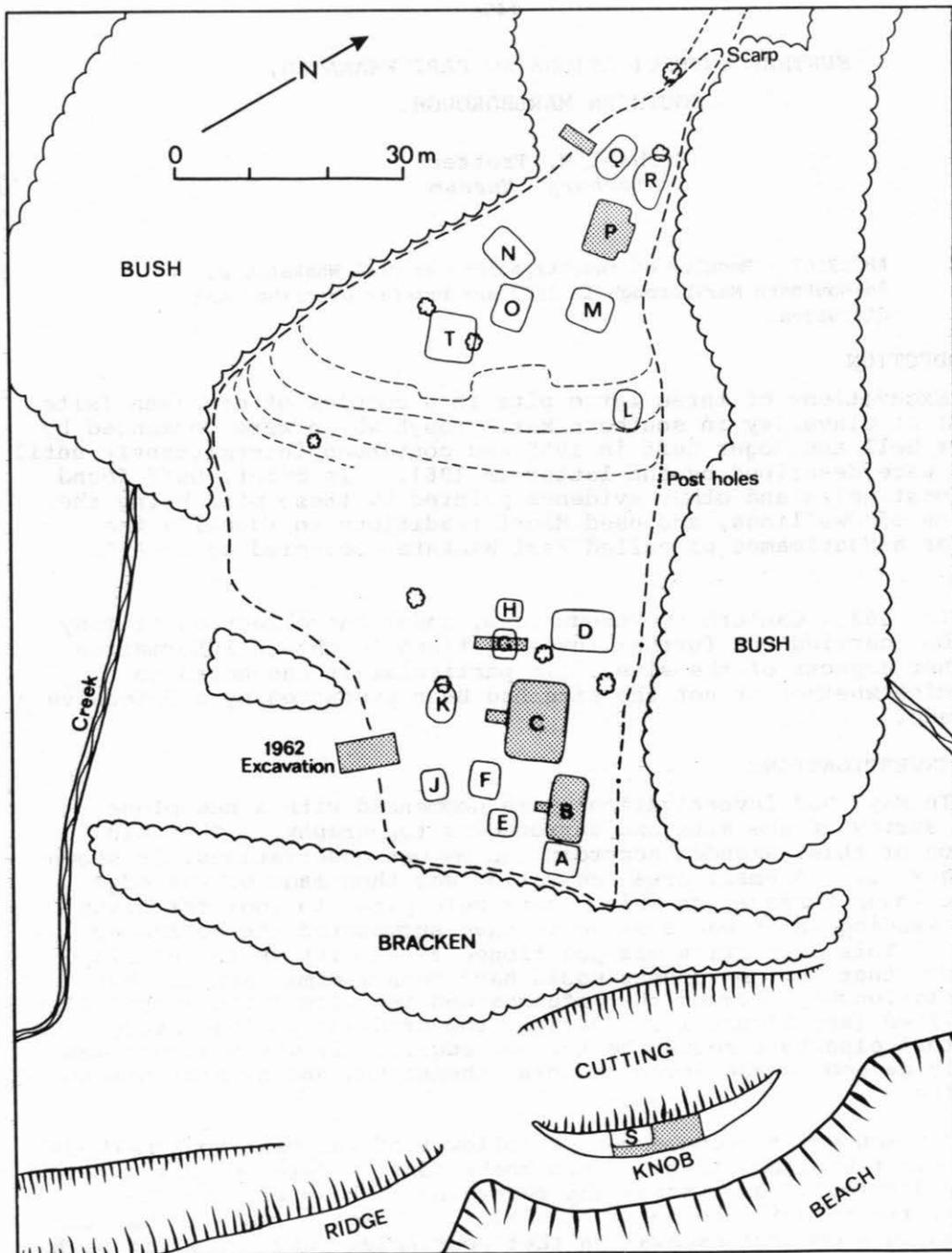


Figure 1. Plan of site S55/7, Pari Whakatau, showing areas excavated. From a plane table survey, 1962, with amendments by Michael Trotter, 1975.

been dug, this method enabled them to be studied and recorded before the top ends were sliced off in the course of horizontal excavating. It also overcame the objections of the common practice of digging out post holes from the level from which they had originally been dug.

A pattern of twenty-seven post holes was found in an area of four metres square (Figure 2). These appeared to represent a main defensive palisade of closely spaced 20 centimetre diameter posts, with (less certainly) a section of secondary internal palisade approximately parallel to it. Outside the main palisade were ten post holes which were interpreted as the remains of a fighting platform built out over the hill slope in the form of a bastion. Fomison (1962) suggested that the internal palisade may have comprised only sections of light stakes with groups of two or three large supporting posts at intervals, two of these groups showing up in the excavation. His reconstruction is shown in Figure 3. Referring to ethnographical records, Fomison noted that fighting platforms (or stages) commonly defended gateways and considered that although the closely spaced posts of the outer line may have precluded a gateway there, the wider space in the inner line did not. It could be, therefore, that the platform defended an inner gateway reached by passage between the two palisades from an outer entrance elsewhere on the perimeter.

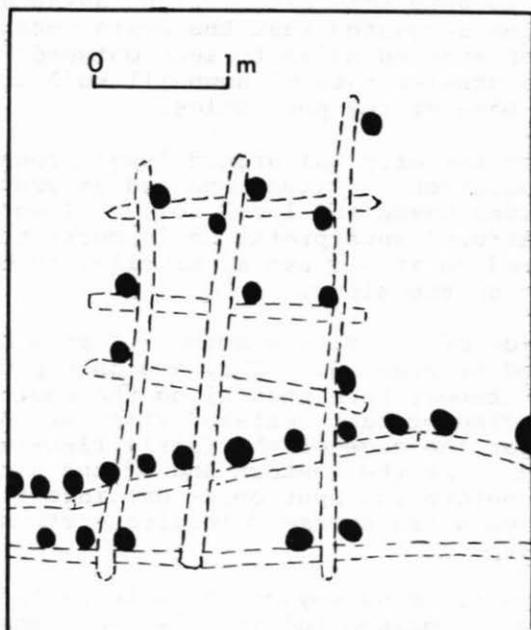


Figure 2. Plan of post hole distribution in part of Tony Fomison's 1962 excavation.

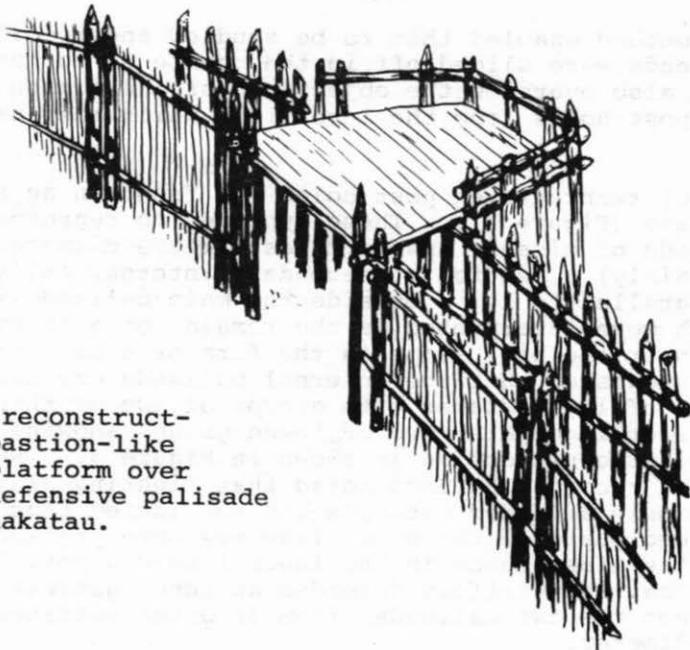


Figure 3.

Fomison's reconstruction of a bastion-like fighting platform over the main defensive palisade at Pari Whakatau.

The palisade was positioned below the crest of the slope, presumably in order to gain some extra height advantage for the defenders. The holes suggested that the posts were not quite vertical but had been erected so as to lean outward; this may, however, be due to a greater rate of downhill soil creep near the surface than at the base of the post holes.

At approximately the original ground level around the post holes were two accumulations of limestone and greywacke stones which had come from the river beach and local soil. I would suggest that if the "fighting platform" interpretation is correct, then these could have been stored on it for use as missiles to be thrown at any attackers coming up the slope.

On the north side of the site a number of post holes were fortuitously revealed by erosion. They are on top of the scarp slope which is much steeper here than along the south side. These indicate that palisading probably existed right around the perimeter of the site on or near the edge of the fairly flat-topped ridge on which it is situated. At the western end of the site where there is a narrow saddle before the spur opens out into rising hill country, Fomison found a transverse defensive earthwork in the form of an artificial scarp.

During the plane table survey of the site particular attention was paid to the pits. Fomison had at this time been making an extensive survey of Canterbury and southern Marlborough pa sites, (e.g. Formison 1959), and to him the pits, from their surface features, appeared to be of two types. There were the small rounded rectangular ones with slightly raised rims which are found in small

numbers on most pa sites, and the larger, mostly square pits which at Pari Whakatau seemed to replace the habitational terracing usually associated with the first type of pit. On the lower terrace at Pari Whakatau for example pits H, V and K (Figure 1) were the small common type while A, B, C, E and F, were of the second type - the latter were "united by a cohesion of layout which suggests the largest one, C, was related to A, B, E, F, as a community house serving social needs of the family houses surrounding it". (Fomison 1962:23) It was noted too that the small pits occupied marginal positions, typical of other sites surveyed. This suggestion, with the implication of a different function, has yet to be tested by excavation.

MIDDEN

Very little information is available on food remains from the site either from Duff's or Fomison's excavations. Not surprisingly no middens were encountered during excavations of pits or palisade.

In 1960 Ron Scarlett carried out the excavation of a midden on a knob on the opposite side of the road and railway line east of the site, but its relationship to the site itself is unknown. He noted in his field book the presence of bones of albatross *Diomedea*, mollymawk *Thalassarche*, quail *Coturnix*, fish, seal, dog, rat and human, but shells were not identified (apart from a reference to mussels). Shells of cats-eye *Lunella smaragda* and paua *Haliotis iris* occur amongst Duff's excavated material.

On the slightly eroding north face of the ridge and on the south east slope down to the roadway (both logical places for the disposal of rubbish) I noted in 1975 quantities of charcoal and burnt "oven" stones (plus occasional fish bones, etc.) in a black earth matrix. Similar deposits were exposed on the knob that Scarlett excavated and on a ridge immediately south of it (which has also been cut by the railway line).

ARTIFACTS

Approximately two hundred artifacts have been recorded from the Pari Whakatau excavations, but almost one third of these came from the excavation on the knob of the seaward side of the road and railway cutting. Because of this cutting it is now impossible to determine the original topographical relationship between the knob and the ridge on which the eighteen pits are found. However, the difference of the underlying lithologies suggests that it was a distinct knob separated from the main part of the site by a saddle on the ridge.

The main archaeological features on this knob are a pit and a midden, both of which have been damaged by the railway cutting. These features cannot be stratigraphically connected to the main part of the site and are unlikely to have been included within the site's defenses. The single pit on the knob has different characteristics to those on the ridge but this *could* be due to the slope of the ground and the different underlying rock (a soft

sandstone) at this point.

We are thus faced with the unresolved question of the contemporaneity or otherwise of the knob with the rest of the site; this is a pity as many diagnostic artifacts, including parts of four fish-hooks and seven adzes, were found here.

On the other hand, a case for contemporaneity might be made from the presence of identical stone materials, adze types and of pits on either side of the cutting, and from the size of the knob site which would have been too small to function as a separate unit. It does in fact seem likely that the knob and the ridge immediately south of it (see Figure 1) were external features of the pa.

Artifacts from the two terraces on which pits A to T are located indicate that a range of activities was carried out here. Flakes of flint, chert, and chalcedony were probably used in the preparation of food and possibly in the shaping of bone and wood - obsidian flakes may have been used for cutting finer materials; greywacke attrition saws have been used for cutting stone, probably greenstone (nephrite); sharp edged argillite adzes indicate wood working; a greenstone gouge suggests wood carving and pieces of red tuff have been used to produce pigment. Only one adze is unbroken and it is still in the process of having its edge ground, another has been reshaped from a broken poll - and then been broken again. Other broken adze pieces (most argillite and similar rocks, but one of greenstone) suggest that the material was being reworked into smaller adzes or other tools. Two pieces of greenstone are probably broken pendants and a flake of fairly clear crystalline quartz is of unknown use.

Material from the knob includes three different types of fish-hooks (shank-barbed one-piece, barbed two-piece and trolling hooks), cut human bone and bird bone, a ?needle point, flint flakes, a broken chisel and some adze pieces - there appears to be a pre-dominance of adze polls from both the knob and the site proper.

The presence of obsidian flakes from at least two North Island sources, Nelson area argillite and West Coast greenstone show that the occupants of the ridge site had the usual "trade" contacts, and local stones - flint, quartz and greywacke - were also used. The source of the red tuff is not known but is likely to be Banks Peninsula.

GENERAL

Although neither artifacts nor midden remains were very numerous at Pari Whakatau, they appear from casual observation to be more plentiful here than from the average pa site along the Canterbury - Marlborough coast if we consider both the knob and the main ridge area as a single site. Statistics are not available, but most pa in this area have very little evidence of much occupation. The few exceptions, such as Peketa, S49/23, at which artifacts, burnt stones, charcoal and faunal remains are scattered over

and around the site, suggest that their function, their period of occupation, or the circumstances of their abandonment were in some way different from normal. Fomison (1962) suggests that artifacts are common only on sites that were sacked, i.e., destroyed while they were occupied, and that Pari Whakatau was not.

I believe that the amount of occupational material found indicates that the site was lived in for only a short time; it may have served as a fortified retreat for people living in the general area.

The fortifications, pits, use of human bone for artifacts, fish-hook and adze types, knotted ornamentation and to some extent the amount and variety of greenstone used, place the site in what might be termed the South Island Classic, while Mayor Island obsidian and use of argillite rather than greenstone for adzes makes it early Classic.

Comparison of artifact types and materials and faunal remains place Pari Whakatau as somewhat more recent than the nearby site at Lagoon Flat (McCulloch and Trotter 1975:3,17) which has a bone collagen radiocarbon date of 480±60 years B.P.

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