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HAURAKI MISSION STATION: UNEARTHING AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL LANDSCAPE

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Introduction

In early 1833, the Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS) initiated plans to expand its mission beyond the Bay of Islands to “southern districts” in the North Island (Monin 2001: 77). This led to the establishment of the original Hauraki mission station (HMS) on the banks of the Puriri stream in late 1833. This site was wet and swampy, however, and unpleasant to live in. As a result, the station was moved to Parawai (Thames) in 1837, and was established on the high ground above Herewaka Stream, overlooking the Kauaeranga River (Figure 1). The CMS obtained a large block of land at Parawai – about 360 acres (OLC83 1849). There were various features associated with the mission station, including three churches (one still existing), three houses (one probable mission house still in place), old trees and burial sites (including two sets of existing gravestones).

The author has conducted a ‘rolling investigation’ of the HMS since 2007. The Parawai site was first recorded as an archaeological site (T12/1291) in 2007, with an update in 2010. Currently, work is in progress to locate the original raupō church site, plus the site of two ‘native graves’ which are shown on an old survey map, recently obtained.

The Puriri site

The CMS established the original HMS on the banks of the Puriri Stream in 1833 (Monin 2001, Phillips 2000). The establishment was in line with CMS plans to develop missions further south of the original Bay of Islands station, following the so-called ‘musket wars’ of the 1820s, and a period of

was on the banks of the Puriri stream. They left behind tools and instructions for local Māori to build three raupō whare. On 19 December 1833, catechist James Preece (selected as head of the Puriri mission), John Morgan and their families set out for the site in the schooner *Fortitude* and arrived four days later to a joyous reception from 300 people.

In the first six months, the missionaries built a weatherboard store and the frame for a weatherboard chapel, as well as conducting visits to many parts of the Hauraki area. The wet, swampy nature of the area took its toll, however; particularly among young children, some of whom were born at the station. As the Hauraki Plains were not drained until c.1910 (Gavalas 2005), the Puriri site was particularly unpleasant to live in. As a result, the station was moved to Parawai (Thames) in 1837.

The Puriri site is recorded as archaeological site T12/340. This describes the location as the north (true right) bank of Puriri stream. The record states: "... reported site of Puriri Mission, established Nov/Dec 1833. No definite evidence save for [acacia] trees, and for location just above tidal limit." The T12/340 record was based on a visit by Simon Best in 1978. Stuart Bedford (1994) and Caroline Phillips (2000), however, both believe the site was on the true left bank of the Puriri stream, close to the existing Station Road/Wharf Road junction. This was apparently based on the site's proximity to a sharp bend in the Puriri stream, which is apparent in the Wade sketch (Figure 2). The sharp bend still existed at the time of Bedford's survey, but was straightened out during works associated with the Waihou Flood Protection Scheme in the 1990s.



Figure 2. Sketch of HMS Puriri site by William Wade, c.1836 (ATL F-151456-1/2, Alexander Turnbull Library).

The author visited the area in 2007, with Warner Hunter (resident of Bond Road, Matatoki) who has lived in the area for over 60 years and spent his early life (to age about 15 years) living in a house next to the Puriri stream. This visit was an attempt to clarify the location of the Puriri site, and view some other interesting features in the area. According to Warner, the Puriri stream and its tributaries have changed course many times during his lifetime, and flooding has resulted in large quantities of silt being deposited. It is therefore difficult to establish how the landscape would have looked in the 1830s.

The Puriri site, as recorded by Simon Best, is marked by a grove of acacia trees. According to Warner Hunter, this is where locals always thought the mission site was (e.g. Clark 2003: 25-26). Warner stated that in his childhood, the ‘acacias’ site (Figure 3) consisted of a complete rectangle of acacia trees, with a raised platform of earth in the middle, indicating it was a site of European origin. Bedford states:

Also extensively surveyed and test pitted was the area of the ‘acacias’...an area which according to some local identities was the site of the Mission Station...Through both the historical and archaeological evidence this area can safely be discounted as the site of the Mission Station.

Bedford 1994 90-91



Figure 3. Acacia trees remaining at T12/340. According to Warner Hunter, these were laid out in a distinctive rectangle at the time of his childhood; however, a number have since died.

The main historical evidence indicating the mission was at the Station Road/Wharf Road site appears to be the Wade sketch (Figure 1), which shows the station located on a prominent loop in the Puriri stream. This probably corresponds to the loop that was adjacent to Station Road prior to the stream being straightened by the Waihou Flood Protection Scheme in the 1990s (Figure 4). In view of the natural changes in the area since the 1830s, however, it may not be prudent to completely discount the acacias site as the location of the mission (nor others for that matter).

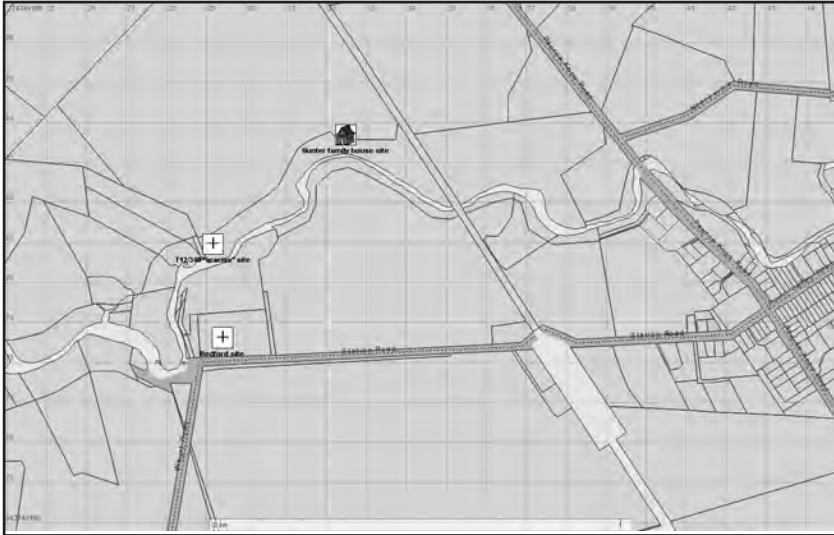


Figure 4. TUMONZ vector map of Puriri area, showing key locations. The sharp bend in the river, believed by Bedford to be that shown in the Wade sketch, is marked. This was straightened out by flood protection works in the 1990s. (The route of the Thames/Paeroa railway is shown – this also no longer exists.)

Another site of interest that was pointed out by Warner Hunter was that of his family home (now demolished) several hundred metres upstream from the acacias site. This has a large concrete pad, approximately 50 m away from the main house site. According to family anecdotes, the house dated back to the time of the Puriri/Neavesville gold rush (1875), and the house, being at the tidal extremity of the Puriri stream, was used as an unloading point and store

for items being sent up to the goldfields. This has not been pursued, but may be worthy of further investigation.

The Parawai site

The site chosen at Parawai was on high ground above the Kauaeranga River, on the north side of the Herewaka stream (Monin 2001, Isdale 1992a, Isdale 1992b). The site was chosen for its access (by river), and close proximity to the large Kauaeranga pā. Over a period of time, from 1837, several buildings, including at least two houses, were constructed on the hillside site. By the mid-1840s, however, the head of the mission (James Preece) had been transferred elsewhere and the station was falling into disrepair.

In December 1849, Rev. Thomas Lanfear was sent to resuscitate the Kauaeranga station. According to Lanfear:

We reached the mission house which is prettily situated on a steep rise of about 150 ft. from the head of the Mataparua Creek [now apparently called Herewaka stream]. It is a fine roomy wooden house, but in a sadly neglected state, the verandah being in fact in perfect ruins, windows broken, and bearing all the evidences of a long unoccupied house...The chapel...situated about 300 yards from the house, is a large raupō building with glass windows, but is falling to pieces, almost roofless and all the windows broken. It contains a very neat pulpit and communion table.

Monin 2001: 162

In 1853, arrangements were made to build a wooden church at the HMS, but there was a dispute over the timber, and the project was not completed until 1863. Lanfear reported to the CMS in December 1863: "I have completed the building of a new chapel for my station at Hauraki. Total cost £140. Of this, my friends and I have contributed £102." (Monin 2001: 165). This church was built on the site of the existing house at 300 Parawai Road (the south side of the intersection between Parawai and Mountsea roads). The church site and the small cemetery behind it are recorded as archaeological site T12/898. The church was apparently dismantled in 1910 (Twohill 2001, NZAA site record form T12/898). According to notes attached to T12/898: "... for about 20 years before being pulled down in 1910, [the church] was not used for Christian worship and was allowed to go to ruin."

Another church, named Holy Trinity, was built further south along Parawai Road in 1886 and is still in situ as at February 2012 (Figure 5). It was consecrated by Bishop William Cowie on 18 May 1886 (Hays 1968: 41) and was also part of the HMS. A building date of 1886 would roughly coincide with the cessation of worship at the 300 Parawai Road site. The Holy Trinity church is

also mentioned in site record T12/898. It underwent extensive restoration in 2010 and is now used for regular church services again. There are two grave stones remaining in the grounds of the church.



Figure 5. Holy Trinity church, after undergoing restoration in 2010.

Several site visits were conducted in the Mountsea Road-Herewaka Street area during 2007, based on photographic evidence and information provided by local property owners and several more visits have been conducted since then, to follow up new information coming to hand. According to locals, there was a mission building on the property at 200 Mountsea Road (Figure 6). There are no signs of such a building remaining, apart from the two large trees in the front yard. According to current owner Mark Millington, his parents owned the property during his childhood, and believed it was an original mission house. Mark remembers part of the old floor remaining, but this was later replaced. He believed that there was another HMS building further down the hill from his property, towards Parawai Road (distinct from the church). He was unaware of the nature and exact location. Historical photos, however, which show a side-on view of a portion of the church in relation to the mission

house and yard (Figure 7), would seem to indicate that there was another house close to the edge of the escarpment.



Figure 6. Large English oak and Moreton Bay fig at 200 Mountsea Road. Apparently, Moreton Bay figs were commonly planted at CMS sites.



Figure 7. HMS house, late 1860s, thought to be at the 106 Mountsea Road site. (G-96135-1/2, D M Beere Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library.)

The 300 Parawai Road site, owned by Craig and Cathy Bell, was also visited. They pointed out the location of the original HMS wooden church and a few remaining gravestones in a small cemetery at the back of the property (Figure 8). They also supplied a copy of a photo of the original wooden church (Figure 9).



Figure 8. Grave stone at bottom of escarpment, 300 Parawai Road.



Figure 9. Church at 300 Parawai Road, c.1900.

A search was also conducted at 106 Mountsea Road. This is at the top of the escarpment, and the likely site of the mission house shown in Figure 4. The then owner of 106 Mountsea Road (Trevor Schon) stated that he had owned the property for about 18 years and could not provide any information about the mission. A search was conducted of the small paddock surrounding the house but no remnants of the mission house were found (no digging was undertaken). There is, however, a set of old concrete steps that leads diagonally across the escarpment towards Mountsea Road, which was probably a route down to the church below (Figure 10).



Figure 10. Concrete steps leading across edge of the escarpment at 106 Mountsea Road. The steps lead towards Mountsea Road, and may have been a route from the mission house down to the church below.

Discussions were also held with Earl Cox and his wife, residents of 108 Mountsea Road. Earl and his sons assisted the then-owner to pull down the remains of an old house at 106 Mountsea Road, which was destroyed by fire around 1960 (Figure 11). After viewing the 1867 photo of the original mission house (Figure 7), Earl believed that the old house he helped pull down was the old mission house. The house had been extended, apparently using recycled timber from another old building in Thames. He recalled that there were shingles under the corrugated iron roof. He stated that the current house at 106

Mountsea Road is built on the site of the house that was demolished c.1960. This adds weight to the photographic evidence that 106 Mountsea Road is the site of the main house at HMS Parawai.



Figure 11. Charred timber and iron on escarpment between 106 Mountsea Road and 300 Parawai Road, thought to be the remains of the mission house at 106 Mountsea Road.

The visits and searches mentioned above led to the submission of T12/1291, the original site record form for the HMS Parawai site. A couple of years later, the chance acquisition of a photograph looking west from the foothills above Parawai revealed another view of the HMS, including a possible third house (Figure 12).

Placing a date on this photo is not easy. Historical evidence suggests that the likely date is 1900 +/- 15 years (see the site record form for a detailed analysis).

Local anecdotal information provided to the author in 2007 suggested that the house at 124 Grafton Road (Figure 13) was related to the mission station, but Figure 11 is the first historical evidence to be found indicating that this may be the case. The three houses in Figure 12 look as if they were part

of a farm or garden complex. Figure 12 also shows the Thames water race (opened 1876) in close proximity to the southern-most house. The TUMONZ property map shows the water race passed approximately 70 m east of the house at 124 Grafton Road. Also, survey records show that the current property at 124 Grafton Road was originally CMS land (according to TUMONZ property information: “CMS Grant Allotment 27”).



Figure 12. View of HMS Parawai area, taken from high ground to the east, above Mountsea Road, with key locations marked (MC 109 Merv Cunningham collection, Coromandel Heritage Trust Treasury).

In April 2010, the author visited the property and met the current owner, Don Jonson, and his wife. According to Mr Jonson, he bought the property from a Mrs Cowles in 1974. Apparently Mrs Cowles had done some research on the house and claimed it was 120-140 years old (at that time). There was a pear tree (still standing in 2010) in the garden that was also that old. The house had been modified in 1973, and Mr Jonson has modified it since; however, there remain kauri weatherboards (which look pit-sawn) on the exterior of the house and on two walls of an outhouse, kauri ceilings in the house (since lowered to save heating bills) and a hand-carved kauri fireplace. The roof was corrugated iron when Mr Jonson bought it in 1974. There are several old fruit trees in the

garden (as well as the pear mentioned previously). There are two sets of foundations in the back garden which were apparently both glass-houses and one of which was originally a pigsty. According to Mr Jonson, he has uncovered remnants of another, older, building in the southeast corner of the property at various times over the years.



Figure 13. Possible mission house at 124 Grafton Road.

Although there are obvious modifications (notably the roof) and extensions, the weight of evidence suggests that the existing house at 124 Grafton Road was the third house shown in Figure 12 and was probably part of the HMS Parawai site. Anecdotal evidence puts its age at c.120 years in 1973 (i.e. built c.1853). The year of its construction and exact history, however, were not able to be confirmed.

The most recent investigation relating to the HMS Parawai site commenced in late 2011. A local historian, Miriam Heberley, acquired two old maps that show the original raupō church site, and two native graves.

The map showing the location of the raupō chapel was OLC83 (1849). The probable site of the raupō church was plotted on a topographic map, using a bearing and distance from the site of ‘Mr Preece’s house’, also marked on

the old map (assuming this would have been the main mission house at 106 Mountsea Road). Rather than an exact point, this sort of construction would produce a general area (area of probability); a circle of diameter roughly 50m. The resulting area corresponds with Lanfear's statement that the raupō church was "... situated about 300 yards from the house" (Monin 2001: 162).

A search around that general area on the escarpment did not reveal any signs of the church, and there may not be any remaining above ground, due to the obviously temporary nature of its construction. Also, the areas at the top and bottom of the escarpment, probably more likely sites for a church than on its slope, have been extensively modified by modern housing. Further searches will be conducted in this area.

The two native graves were marked on an extract of a survey map marked SO 34516S (the full version of this is not currently held by the author, so a full reference is not possible). The sites are of interest to Miriam Heberley, as the two deceased (both Māori women) were family members of Daniel Tookey, a prominent European mine owner, who apparently had three Māori wives (two of them possibly at the same time). The likely location of the grave sites was obtained by overlaying the old map over Google Earth using a GIS (Figure 14).

The likely site was located and searched, but no evidence of the graves was apparent above ground. There is a large English oak growing on the site, but these are common in the area, so that is not necessarily a sign relating to the graves. Again, this site is regarded as 'work in progress'.

The key HMS sites identified thus far in the Parawai area are shown at Figure 15 below.

Site significance and management

The HMS sites at Puriri and Parawai are only part of a larger set of CMS mission stations constructed in the early to mid 1800s. The fragmented nature of the HMS (two locations and several individual building sites) and extensive modification, due to farming and residential development, probably mean that the site(s) are not really suitable for interpretation and/or development as tourist attractions. Some local interpretation panels, however, as at the Holy Trinity church, would add interest, and accentuate the rich heritage of the Thames area.

Aside from public interest, the author believes that several of the individual sites, particularly the (probable) house sites at 106 Mountsea Road and 124 Grafton Road, have potential for appropriately planned and executed archaeological excavations, as these sites have considerable tracts of vacant land surrounding them, and have not been subjected to extensive modification.

At very least, the house at 124 Grafton Road should be subjected to historical analysis, and if it turns out to be a mission house, New Zealand Historic Places Trust registration and/or preservation in the local district plan should be considered.

While the HMS site, and this article, are not likely to feature in the annals of New Zealand archaeology, they do demonstrate the value of local anecdotal knowledge, and patience, in unravelling the fabric of a relatively complex site in a heavily modified environment.

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