NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

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KAWERAU SITE SURVEY 1980-81: AN INTERIM REPORT

Caroline Phillips
Anthropology Department
University of Auckland

This is a preliminary report on an archaeological site survey conducted on two blocks of land in the summer of 1980-81. The land is situated to the west and south-west of the modern town of Kawerau and is to be developed for housing by the Housing Corporation. A team of six people undertook the fieldwork over three weeks. Subsequently various details were checked in the field by the survey supervisor. The two areas of land comprised the 19 ha Ballantrae Block and an approximately 144 ha block containing the Long and Marshall Valleys (see Figs. 1 and 2).

Aims and methods

The aims of the survey were:

1. To locate as many as possible of the visible surface features within the two areas.
2. To record them in detail and observe the range and distribution of features within the areas (from which decisions on future archaeological work could be made).
3. To produce maps which could be used as base plans for any excavation work.
4. To write site record forms and present a final report.

The survey group generally worked in two teams of two people each, one measuring by compass and tape (pacing on smaller sloping terraces) and one recording. The scale of recording was 1:100 or 1 cm to 1 m. The teams located and recorded features individually; the supervisor combined these into sites, assigned field numbers to the sites and features, drew sketchy location maps and checked that all details were recorded. The sixth member of the team was generally involved in cutting thistles; this job was rotated.

The field check was deemed necessary to iron out inconsistencies observed between the teams' recorded features, the supervisor's sketches, and a 1:1500 planimetric map provided by the Housing Corporation. It is now hoped that all obvious features have been recorded and located within a few metres of their true position, and that all the larger terraces and pits are recorded even more precisely as to their exact shape and location.

In the field the landscape, which was more or less covered with features, was arbitrarily divided into sites with a field number being

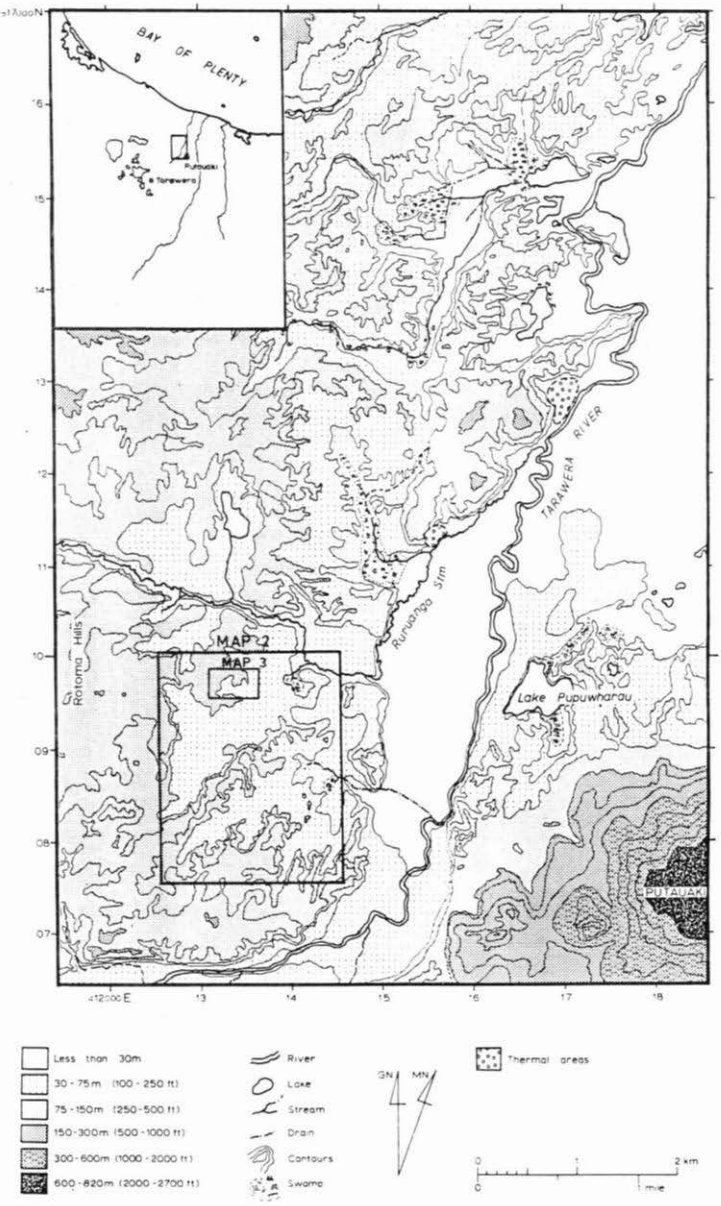

FIGURE 1. Location of site survey.

allocated. Subsequently the ridges were more logically divided up, with a peak and its surrounding hillsides, spurs and ridgelines generally being counted as one site. Occasionally gently sloping hillsides and the intervening valleys, or a series of side ridges would be counted as one site (see Fig.2). The aim of grouping the features into sites was basically one of convenience for discussion and writing the site record forms.

General topography

The two areas include three ridges composed of a series of small rolling to steep hills (15^{o} - 45^{o}) with narrow connecting saddles and generally short side spurs. The hills rise approximately 30 - 35 m above the broad valley floors.

The Ballantrae Block is a roughly square area in which the main ridge circles around in a horseshoe shape. The Long and Marshall Valley block comprises three ridges with the large intervening valleys. The ridge at the south-eastern side of the block (along which the boundary runs) is not to be touched by development and was not surveyed. The central ridge, between Marshall and Long Valleys, and here called Marshall Ridge, was shaped like an extended S. The ridge at the north-west side of the block, between Long Valley and Valley Road subdivision area (also in a broad flat valley), is here called Long Ridge; this was basically straight with some longer side ridges extending in an easterly direction. The main ridges and side spurs etc. are shown in Figure 2.

Both areas were grazed, though parts of the Long and Marshall Ridges had reverted into thistle, fern and weeds. Thistles were cut to enable identification and mapping of features, but recording could not be as accurate in these places. It was observed that approximately 50 cm of Tarawera ash was deposited on the area during the 1886 eruption. This is an unstable material which was inclined to slipping on the steeper slopes, and where fences, vehicle and cattle tracks occurred.

Features and sites

It was observed that most land sloping at less than 20^{o} had been modified in some way. This took the form of terracing, which for convenience was classified into five categories depending on location and slope, see Table 1. Other observed features included pits and house sites.

Apart from surface disturbances, the Tarawera deposit appeared to have settled unevenly over the area. As would be expected land exposed to the south-west (the direction of Tarawera) would get a greater

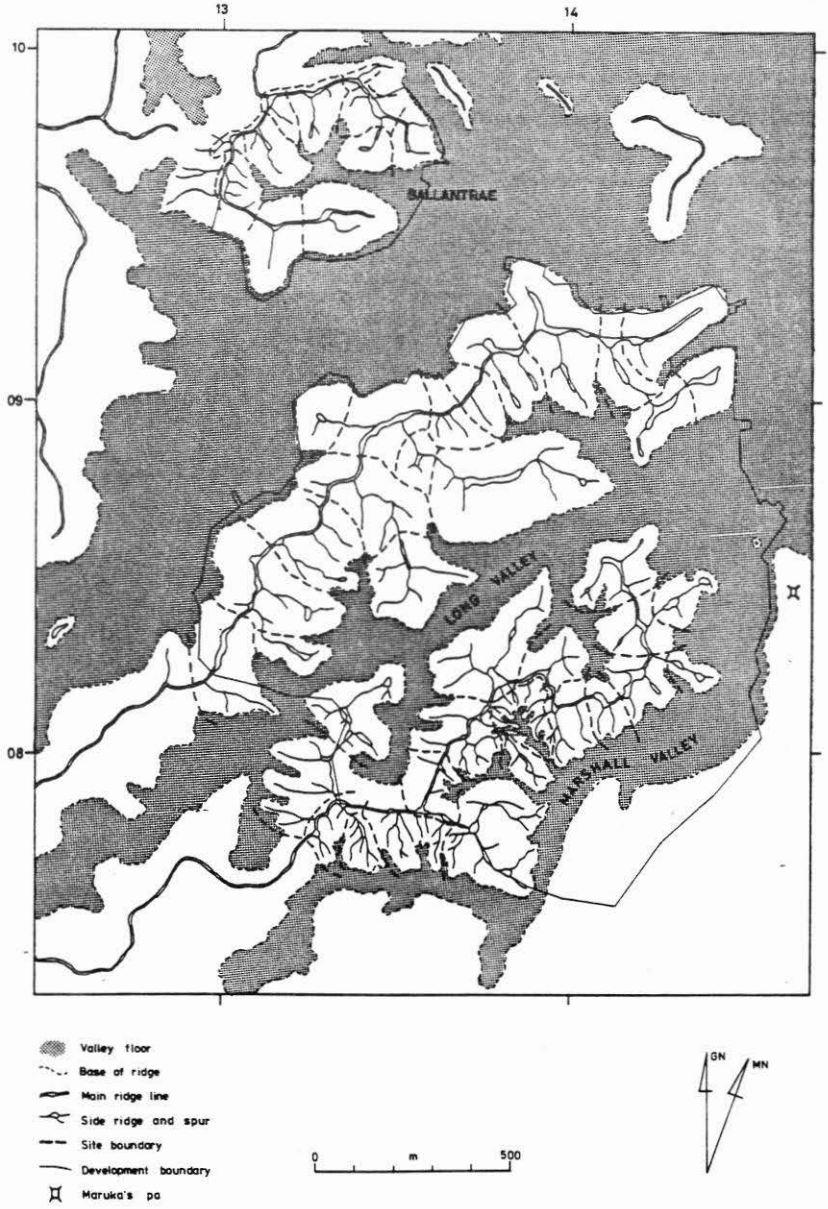

FIGURE 2. Survey boundaries and ridges.

Terraces

A Ridgetop terrace - levelled peak, flat
B Ridge terrace - levelled ridgeline or spur, flat
C Hillside terrace - cut into side of hill, flat
D Sloping terrace - cut into side of hill, sloping at 5° - 8°
E Valley terrace - cut into sloping valley floor, sloping at 5° - 7°

Pits

Pits - depressed ares of reasonably regular shape
Possible pits - shallow depressions, often of irregular shape

House sites

House sites - very flat areas on terraces, often protected on one or two sides by a low bank

TABLE 1. Classification of features.

covering than land protected from that direction. This proved to be the case, with land 10 - 20 m below hills situated to the south-west exhibiting much clearer features than the rest.

On the three ridges 49 sites were recorded. At Ballantrae the features were divided into eleven sites, at Marshall Ridge 20 sites and at Long Ridge 18 sites. The difference in the ratio of the various terrace classes to each other and the other features can be seen in Table 2. At a glance it can be seen that Ballantrae has proportionally more living and storage terraces (classes A-C), while Marshall has more agricultural terraces (classes D-E) and Long has twice as many pits, though few if any agricultural terraces.

Features		Ballantrae	Marshall	Long	Possible use
Terraces	A	8	22	19	?living and storage terraces
	B	22	62	72	
	C	18	21	40	
	D	24	134	51	for living and storage or agriculture
	E	8	20	0	? agricultural terraces
Total		80	259	182	
Pits		5	15	33	for storing food
House sites		6	21	19	for houses or shelters

TABLE 2. Feature list.