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LETTERS

Dear Sir

The NZAA Site Recording Scheme provides the best evidence there is on the number and distribution of pa sites. Jack Walls (*Archaeology in New Zealand*, 49(4): 299) has questioned the validity of this data for Golden Bay and suggested that this throws doubt on its reliability for the country as a whole. He hopes that the upgrade project will improve the data.

There are currently five sites recorded as pa in Golden Bay. There appears to be no argument about three of these i.e. M24/1 (Puponga Point), M25/9 (Taimata Pakawau), and M25/13 (Pariwhakaoho). Four sites have been “called pa in the records without definite evidence” but only one of these is currently classified as a pa. There is a good case for this record to be so classified.

N25/35 was originally recorded by Owen Wilkes. He classified the site as a pa based on his identification of a ditch on the narrowest part of the headland. The headland was much modified after his 1961 visit and this has made it difficult (or impossible) to verify the features he recorded. The likely presence of a ditch justifies retaining his original classification. The upgrade project revisited the site in March 2003 and kept the existing classification.

N25/50 (Taupo Point) is the fifth Golden Bay site that is currently listed as a pa. This site was originally recorded by Owen Wilkes as a “habitation area.” He also noted that there was a drawing by Barnicoat (March 1844) which showed that “this is the site of a flat land pa defended by a single stockade.” Recorders have shown some reluctance to use the historical evidence in classifying the site. In my view the historical record justifies calling it a pa. The upgrade project decided not to visit this particular site.

There will always be room to argue about the appropriateness of some classifications. The data is not immutable. Records are re-assessed and sites are re-classified as new evidence comes to hand. I don't see any evidence of unacceptably bad data for Golden Bay.

Tony Walton

Department of Conservation