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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

By permission of the Department of Lands and Survey, New Zealand.

ERRATA:

Throughout this article Parangahu should be spelt Parangarahu.

MAORI SITES IN FITZROY BAY

J.B. Palmer

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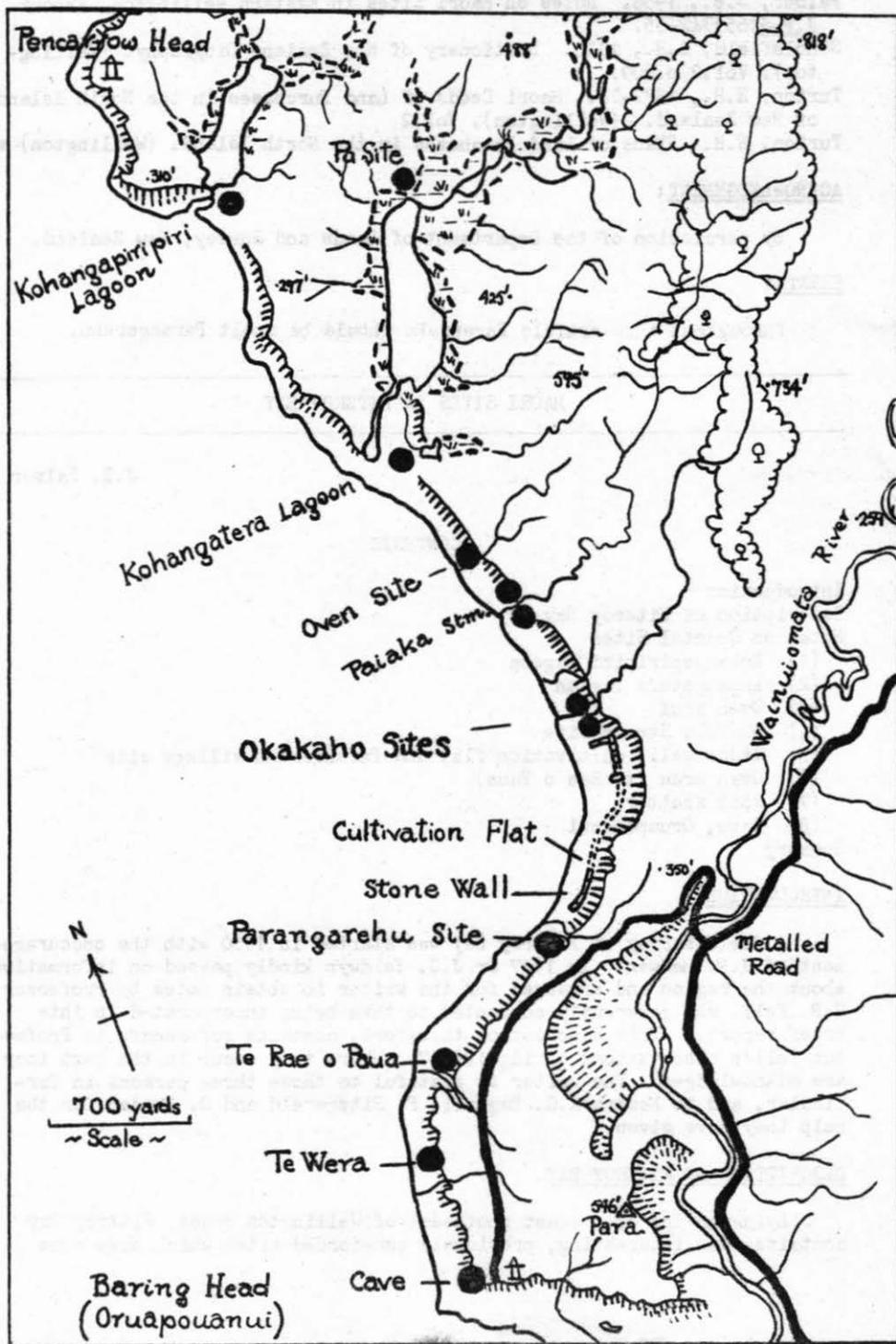
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INTRODUCTION:

A field survey of Fitzroy Bay was started in 1950 with the encouragement of J.M. McEwen. In 1957 Dr J.C. Yaldwyn kindly passed on information about the region and arranged for the writer to obtain notes by Professor H.B. Fell, who generously consented to them being incorporated in this brief report. This description therefore, contains references to Professor Fell's observations during 1936-7. Where they occur in the text they are acknowledged. The writer is grateful to those three persons in Particular, and to Messrs A.G. Bagnall, F. Fitzgerald and O. Burdan for the help they have given.

DESCRIPTION OF FITZROY BAY:

Lying on the open coast southeast of Wellington Heads, Fitzroy Bay contains some interesting, previously unrecorded sites which have some



features distinguishing them from those on the coastline just to the north.

The Bay itself extends from the headland (grid reference 407127) south of Pencarrow to a point to the north of Baring Head (422071), a distance of about three miles. It is a region characterised by a wide foreshore consisting of two raised beaches backing onto a nearly vertical old wave-cut cliffline (now modified by talus and wind-blown fans at the base), a series of transversely tilted marine terraces towards Baring Head, and two valleys leading into the bay with lagoons at the seaward end. In winter these lagoons have outlets to the sea, but in summer the ponded southern extremities are near high water level so that seepage takes place through the beach shingle. Formerly, these outlets may have been navigable by canoes as the whole region has been uplifted and warped, with the maximum emergence at the eastern end of the bay. Consequently the lagoons are somewhat smaller now, but the old shoreline may be traced above what is now swamp.

Most of Fitzroy Bay is exposed to the winds from the northwest and the south, although there is some measure of protection from the former under the cliffs. This prevalence of wind probably affected life there, as the normally strong undertow and current would become a hazard in prolonged windy weather, with southerlies creating high seas, and northerlies liable to blow canoes off-shore. This suggests that the inhabitants either occupied the region during certain seasonal periods, or depended on a stored or alternative food supply during long periods of bad weather. Fortunately the valleys and ridges gave access to a famed fowling area² while the lagoons provided quantities of eels. It is known that parts of the flat were cultivated³ so that permanent settlement could have been possible. Evidence of food supply suggests that several food items could have been dried during the summer months and stored for later use, so that the limitations of food gathering may have been overcome during prolonged wet and windy periods. It is an interesting thought to speculate whether such a marginal climatic region will reveal a greater emphasis on storage facilities than other more favourable areas further north, and whether agricultural productivity is the factor that governs this. When one considers the larger northern populations with their complex fortified pa and attendant maze of storage pits, one suspects that agriculture is the key factor. One task for Wellington archaeological surveys and excavations could be to investigate this aspect of the settlement pattern. There are several extensive terrace formations of alleged agricultural origin around Wellington but there are few signs of storage pits.

Vegetation in the bay consists of tussock and mountain flax on the steep faces of the hills, while tussock, mengemenge and tauhinu are found on parts of the beach along with introduced lupin and gorse. A little toe-toe is growing at some of the streams, and at Okakaho there is a pleasant grove of karaka trees.

Evidence of sea-foods in the sites⁴ shows an adequate range of species but the comparative absence of shells in some of the sites suggests that conditions may have been different in the past unless deflation has removed most of the shells. Mollusca identified by Dr R.K. Dell include oyster Ostrea sinuata, mussel Mytilus planulatus, cat's-eye Lunella smaragda, turban shell Cookia sulcata, limpet Cellana denticulata; other mollusca listed by Professor Fell include paua Haliotis iris, and Kakahi Hyridella menziesi. Sea urchin Evichinus chloroticus was present in several sites,

while fish (identified by Mr J. Moreland of the Dominion Museum) were all common coastal species, most of them inhabiting rock and weed areas: conger eel Conger conger, barracouta Thyrsites atum, banded parrotfish Pseudolabrus pittensis, red soldierfish Pseudolabrus coccineus, and butterflyfish Coriodax pullus. Birds identified by Dr J.C. Yaldwyn include mollymawk Thalassarche sp., black-backed gull Larus dominicensis, and huia Heteralocha acutirostris. Two points of interest emerge from this list from Fitzroy Bay sites. First, there is an absence of true pipi (Nesodesma australe and Chione stutchburyi), and Professor Fell records their absence from the present beach at the western end of the bay. Secondly, the presence of two female upper mandibles of the huia can be linked with Heaphy's statement that the ranges between Wainuiomata and Palliser Bay were noted for the presence of the huia.⁵ Whether the occurrence of mandibles in these archaeological sites represents huia's being used as a food item or for decorative purposes is not clear. In addition to the above, there were remains of the Maori dog or kuri, rat and seal, together with those of humans.

Very little has been recorded about Fitzroy Bay and only a few references have been made to it.⁶ The history of the Maori tribes occupying this particular part of the Wellington coast is a rather sketchy one and there was much mixing and intermarriage so that tribal names do not help as much as one would hope. Not until the early nineteenth century is there a clear picture, with Ngati Ira, a well mixed people, occupying parts of the bay around Kohangatera and Parangarehu until 1825-6 when they were defeated and supplanted by Ngati Awa of Taranaki. It is known that Parangarehu was occupied in 1853⁷ and that by 1860 the outlying villages west of Wellington were being abandoned so that it seems probable that the Maori people were leaving Fitzroy Bay about that time. Since cultural material typical of the Archaic Period has been found in the bay, it is certain that settlement had taken place at an early date. The characteristics of early settlement can only be defined by excavation, but the possibility of recovering assemblages of that period appear to be best at the eastern end of the bay where a light vegetation cover, mainly grass, has prevented destruction of sites.

NOTES ON COASTAL SITES:

1. Kohangapiripiri Lagoon.

This usually placid, weed-infested lagoon fills most of the valley reaching down from Mt Cameron to the sea. At the seaward or southern end, the lagoon shoreline abutts onto an extensive dip-slope of an old raised beach. Behind what appears to be the original foredune, and covering most of the sandy dip-slope is an oven area with quantities of burnt and fractured stones, charcoal, and some traces of shell and fish remains. Indeed the quantity of shell is remarkably little, which is not the case with other sites on the inner Wellington Harbour.⁸ Professor Fell's notes confirmed one's own impression that on the eastern side of the site the reddened, weathered and shattered oven stones have the appearance of greater age. Fell dug at several places and revealed decayed and calcined shell one foot below the then surface (1936-7). The identifiable shells, listed by common names, were paua, kakahi, cat's eye and oyster, usually in a fragmentary condition although ovens exposed by erosion in 1960 at the western side of the site near the lagoon outlet were near present surface

level and the shells from these were mostly intact.

It was from the eastern part of the site, just under the hills, that some interesting items were recovered; a stone minnow lure, flint knives, fragments of hog-back adzes, a 2A adze (Duff classification), and part of a slate pendant. Further westward near the lagoon outlet, the oven and midden refuse is found even on low lying ground on the opposite bank, which suggests that occupation at that point was subsequent to a major uplift. The former shoreline ante-dating uplift would, in all probability, have covered it.

All over the Kohangapiripiri site are signs that it was a workshop site as well. Local concentrations of adzes in unfinished condition, fragments of adzes, cores of argillite, quartzite, flint and obsidian, as well as flakes of these were found. In addition, there are flakes with secondary working on them, saws of baked argillite and flint, drill points, pieces of pitch and scoria, clay pipe stems, stone sinkers, beachstone spawls and hammerstones. The scoria found there may not simply be the result of marine deposition, as one slab nine by seven inches had all the upper edges bevelled, which appeared to be too regular to be the product of rolling. Pieces of pitch or bitumen were at first thought to be of post-European origin, until a piece was seen well below the surface at Paraoanui on the inner harbour. Similar pieces have been found in old camps in Horowhenua, and G.L. Adkin has kindly supplied a reference⁹ that a black, bituminous substance called mimiha or kauri tawhiti was thrown up on the sea shore at Mason Bay on the western end of Stewart Island. The report on these deposits stated that there was a faint perfume of kerosene which was not unpleasant to the palate. Best recorded mimiha or bitumen being used as a masticatory¹⁰ while Williams gave kauri tawhiti as an alternative name, suggestive of a masticatory from a distant origin.¹¹ The more immediate source of supply seems to be between Cape Farewell and Wanganui (South I.) where Heaphy recorded the occurrence of pakaki or pitch which the Maori were fond of chewing, and he stated that it was sent by them to all parts of New Zealand.¹² He described the local variety as hard, compact and shining, and very free from extraneous matter. Pitch or bitumen in association with Maori sites has apparently not received much attention in the past.

2. Kohangatera Lagoon.

Like that of its neighbouring lagoon, the Kohangatera site is situated on the dip-slope of an old raised beach foredune, with a rather larger area of adjacent flat land between the oven area and the lagoon shoreline. This pleasant sunny flat is now grassed and provides grazing for stock. There are several shallow depressions which look like traces of pre-European structures on the flat.

The oven area resembles Kohangapiripiri in that (a) there is a general absence of shell except in one marked concentration; (b) there appears to be a superficially older sector on the eastern side of the site under the hills; and (c) there is evidence of workshop activity mixed with oven remains. The main types of shellfish present were paua Haliotis iris, and Haliotis virginea, common whelk Cominella adspersa, limpet Cellana denticulata, and cat's eye Lunella smaragda. The older oven area at the foot of the hills consists of fractured and weathered ovenstones with no trace

left of charcoal or other refuse. Evidence of workshop activity shows a fine range of flaked material such as cutting flakes, spawls, scrapers, saws, and drill points in flint, chert or baked argillite. Several adzes and chisels were recovered, including a 3B adze (Duff classification), some of them merely flaked and hammer dressed, while others were in various stages of completion. Numerous slivers and fragments of stone tools have been picked up, so the site must originally have been a rich one.

Kohangatera lives up to its name of a "settlement in the sun", as it is more sheltered from the winds which make Kohangapiripiri so unpleasant at times. The upper reaches of Kohangatera lead into another series of swampy areas in the narrow valley before opening out into Gollans Valley where there are signs of more activity. Hence, Kohangatera was closely linked with the sites on the eastern side of Wellington Harbour and with Wainuiomata Valley further east, where signs of occupation have been noted. Kohangatera seems to have been a dispersal point for inland refuge when pa in the present Wellington city area were attacked.

3. Oven area.

A few hundred yards east of Kohangatera there is a nearly dry stream alongside a high, steeply rising fan of sand. Above it is the sheer face of the cliff with its tussock and flax in crevices and ledges reaching up to a large flat area without any trace of occupation. The fan was examined in December 1956, and it proved to be an oven area with paua, mussel, limpet, sunset shell and sea urchin remains, together with bird and rat bones. In addition, there were fire fractured oven stones, flaked beach stones and pieces of worked bone scattered about as a surface remnant, although Professor Fell records the depth of deposit as varying from one to eighteen inches.¹³ The presence of kuri faeces was also noted by him.

It seemed a strange place for an oven site when the flat beach below it would perhaps have been more convenient and better suited for the purpose. One reason to account for this is the possibility that the present fan is the wind-eroded remains of a small promontory which had a flat area on top. Wind erosion has certainly affected this site as midden debris has slipped down to the base of the fan. One point should be noted about these middens built on talus slopes. In describing middens of the Wellington district, Best stated "As many of the hamlets were situated on high lying slopes, spur tops and cliff heads in the vicinity of the sea beach, it follows that we have many talus middens in the area. Nothing pleased the Maori housewife more than to have a cliff head or steep slope handy to her home over which to throw all refuse."

This was the case in many parts of Wellington but a fine point of difference has arisen in some eastern harbour sites. It seems fairly definite from a study of the stratification, the habit of apparently deliberately fitting of shell within shell to form a stack and from the unpromising nature of the higher ground above the talus sites, that oven building extended up the slopes. Thus debris was not necessarily the result of deposition from above. Close inspection of hill slopes above some of the talus middens did not reveal any occupation sites, the presence of which would be implied by Best's remarks. In this part of Wellington at least, the inhabitants did not mind extending their operations uphill to some degree.

A little further along the beach on both sides of the Paiaka Stream are traces of oven areas. Fell stated that those on the northwestern side consisted of a stratified deposit of charcoal, oven stones and flaked tools, devoid of any midden refuse. The oven stones on the southern side of the stream were scattered over an acre or more of shingle slip. Conditions have altered the appearance so much that at the present time only weathered oven stones appear in small quantity on the west bank while recent sand seems to have covered most of the site on the other side of the stream.

4. Okakaho Stream site.

Close to the west bank of this stream is a group of ovens and middens which have been well exposed by the wind. Most of the material consists of surface oven stones, charcoal, beach stone spawls and adze rough-outs. Broken and scattered paua and winkle are in evidence but towards the stream Fell reported bones of fish, bird, dog, rat and human. In addition he recovered flake material and a bone needle. This is from what Fell describes as Site 6, which he states was a well defined midden containing in addition to the remains listed, the following mollusca; paua, winkles, whelks, "spindle shells" and spines, plates and teeth of sea urchins. Hundreds of bones of the three main species of fish mentioned were also found.

On the eastern bank of the stream there are disturbed deposits under the hill with fish bone, sea urchin and shells similar to those found on the opposite bank. Professor Fell found only one specimen here, a human tibia, but in his notes he reports "an elderly native" of the district who said that leg and arm bones were common there when he was a boy.¹⁴ In 1936 the Baring Head lighthouse keeper gave the information that skulls and other bones were lying on the surface about the year 1900. The grove of karaka trees here has a fisherman's hut with a garden, so that it is likely that the whole area has been disturbed. The only likely undisturbed place may be at the foot of the hill a little further along, but talus will be a problem in any further investigation.

Around some of the trees are somewhat circular stone formations but they have the appearance of being modern, and are probably related to local sheep farming practices. Of considerable interest, however, are the signs of stone walls which are quite distinctive. As they are part of a very long stone wall system, the description of the system as a complete unit follows in the next section, even though the northern end of it falls in the immediate Okakaho Stream environment.

5. Stone wall, cultivation flat and Parangarehu village site.

The stone wall system at Parangarehu is an unusual one and different from those found at Palliser Bay. At first it was thought to be only a single wall 300 ft long, and this distance appears in the recorded accounts.¹⁵ A more detailed examination showed that there were indistinct traces of it further north until it became more clearly defined at its northern extremity close to the Okakaho sites. At the latter end it also appears as transverse walls running from the hills at right angles to the shore line

and it is crumbled and overgrown with grass. Here it appears as a swell in the surface which is flattened at the top, the dimensions being three feet across the flattened portion, and the same distance on either flank. Near the southern end there is a small section still fairly well preserved and the measurements are; height 4 ft, width 3 ft 6 ins. These figures make the wall more substantial than Carter's 1853 figures of 3 ft 6 ins and 2 ft respectively; he may have seen a partially collapsed section. In the section being described it was noted that the flat surfaces of the stones had been placed outwards on both sides of the wall, giving it a reasonably flush appearance which showed some care on the part of the people who erected it.

The main line of the wall follows the line of the escarpment rising immediately beyond it and this feature makes it unique. The purpose of erecting it there is unknown unless it is dependent on the talus above it. If it was erected from rocks spread over a suitable cultivation then those rocks may have been used to form a barrier to any future spread of rubble, particularly if the hillside tended to be unstable. Shortly after examining the wall, the writer met Mr G. Burdam of Wainuiomata Valley, who confirmed field observations by stating that he remembered the wall being nearly half a mile long. Mr Burdam also said that curio hunters had pulled down much of the wall as they hoped to find greenstone hidden in it.

The wall actually measures a little over half a mile with occupation sites at either end of it. The relationship of these to the wall system is not clear from mere field observations. The transverse sections were perhaps part of a system of wind breaks and the possibility arises that the wall may be of two ages. These transverse sections could be the remains of pre-European stonework for protecting traditional crops and certainly the collapsed appearance of the wall may support this view. The long stretch of wall at the foot of the hills may represent a later post-European period when the flat was cultivated for wheat growing. This was grown for the Wellington market and the forty residents of Colenso's visits (1845-48 period) threshed 80 bushels of wheat there.¹⁶ More detailed work will show whether the wheat growers were wall builders or not.

Professor Fell's map does not show either the wall or the village site of Parangarehu which is just below the track leading down the escarpment from the Baring Head lighthouse road. Close by the dry stream bed and old boatshed is a group of pits, five in number and rectangular in shape. They are of average size and one has some large, smooth water worn stones in it. The pits are in two roughly parallel rows on a clear flat, on the edges of which are exposed deposits of black oven refuse. From the outer face of one section quantities of seal bone were recovered, along with shells, obsidian and flint flakes. On the sand and shingle below this bank were further flakes together with a circular sectioned adze and broken pieces of stone patu. The 1849 H.M.S. Acheron survey map (Admiralty chart 1423) shows a village in the approximate spot but just south of the stream. The name is given as Parangirau but this is derived from a mis-spelling of an alternative dialectal name of Ngati Awa who were in occupation at that date. Their dialect drops the "h" and by substituting "a" for "i", the name Parangirau is accounted for, Paranga(i)ra(h)u. This suggests that Best's information is incorrect about Parangarahu being the old name of

Pencarrow Head¹⁷ and the site of Tautoki's pa. Not only is there doubt about Tautoki ever being in this region, but there is also no sign of earthworks at Pencarrow Head itself.

6. Oven area (Te Rae o Paua).

Best states that Te Rae o Paua was a place on the beach in Fitzroy Bay¹⁸ but in both the text and the map no specific locality is given. Best placed Parangarahu incorrectly so his placing of Te Rae o Paua was probably a guess.

A site was located in 1957 at a point a few yards north of the fence across the beach by the deep gully (see map). This consisted of a cluster of wind eroded stacks or large rocks, around which were scattered fire-shattered oven stones, several spawls with points of percussion clearly seen on them, and beach stones from which these had been struck. There was an absence of charcoal and shell.

This site is in the general area mentioned by Best but the name could, of course, refer to a natural feature such as a headland. There is a small promontory nearby but the name might also be a mis-spelling of poua which could link it with the cave at Oruapouanui, Baring Head. The site is a small, unimportant one, and was probably used by occasional fishing parties. The rock cluster is on the familiar raised beach in a spot clear of beach vegetation.

7. Rock shelter.

Amidst a group of low rocks a few hundred yards south of the previous site is a shelter. Inside were traces of paua and burnt stones at the far end of the shelter which extended for twelve feet from the entrance, above which was a natural cavity which could allow smoke to escape. Outside the shelter on the seaward side was an area of oven stones, spawls and beach stone boulders which had been used for producing them. This would be a shelter used sporadically during food gathering trips. A drawback to this site is the lack of fresh water.

8. Cave (Oruapouanui).

This cave was where, according to one of his family, the late Captain Bollons collected some of his material. It is situated at Baring Head just below the lighthouse. The entrance has been lowered by rock deposition, but beyond this the cave extends for more than one hundred feet. Halfway in there is an overhanging rock, under which it is necessary to crawl, but the cave then opens out somewhat, and it is possible to stand up with room to spare. The cave floor is sand, a little compacted by moisture and there is some litter from recent occupants. At the far end there is a half-inch layer of ash and charcoal 6 inches below the surface. Nearer the entrance paua and charcoal, together with other shells and bird bones are found at varying depths.

One assumes that this cave was another shelter used when bad weather interrupted food gathering excursions around this part of the coast.

The name Oruapouamui implies a link with the extinct swan and the first part of the name with its connotation pit, hole or grave, is most appropriate. It would seem that the name Oruapouamui was originally the name for the cave and that it later became applied to the headland itself where the cave is situated.

On the cliff edge above the cave at the most projecting part of the point a skeleton was uncovered during excavations for the lighthouse. It was covered over by rocks and boulders only and Professor Fell's early notes for his manuscript stated that some adzes were with the burial, although the MS said that no implements were found. The burial was said to be that of a female but no evidence was put forward to support this.

SUMMARY:

The majority of sites in Fitzroy Bay are wind eroded middens and oven areas with few earthworks apart from definite pits at Parangarehu. There is a stone wall system whose true characteristics are not clear from field observations but its function is linked with the cultivation flat extending from it towards the shoreline. Surface collections of cultural material show affinities with the Archaic period and the Classic Maori phase.

These notes were written overseas and it was not possible to give more detailed descriptions for some sites since my original notes do not seem to be complete. Sizes and details of the pits at Parangarehu and grid references for all sites are the main points missing, but the map will, I hope, rectify the matter to some extent.

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