



NEW ZEALAND
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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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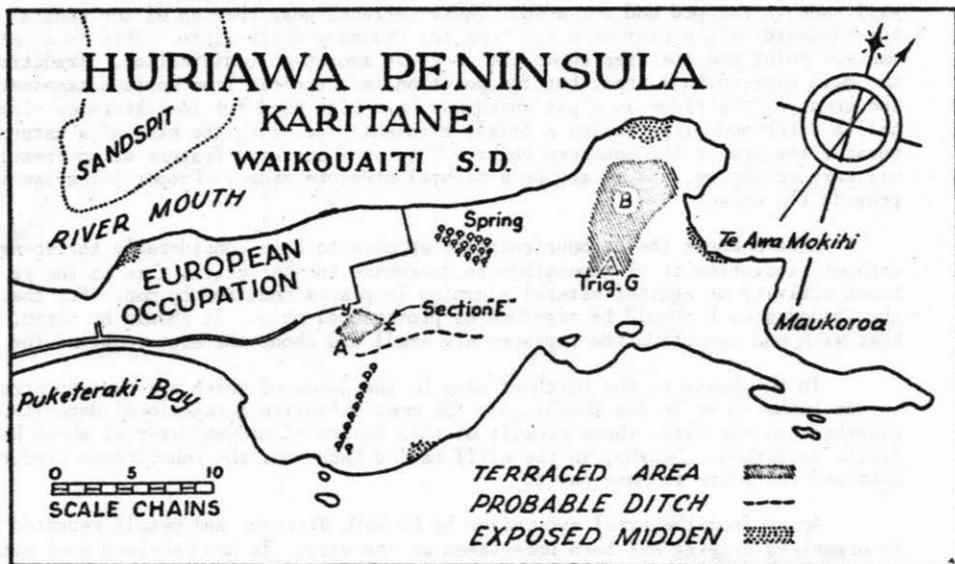
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Pa a Te Wera, Huriawa Peninsula, Karitane

PART I: INTRODUCTION

S. MACKAY

Among the many Maori traditions relating to the Karitane peninsula, known to the Maori as Huriawa, that of the struggle between Taoka and Te Wera is of great interest to the archaeologist. About the middle of the 18th century Taoka attacked Te Wera at Huriawa in continuation of a feud which existed between the two chiefs. Te Wera had fortified Huriawa in anticipation of the attack, and had laid in stores of food sufficient for a year. Taoka came by sea, established a camp on the sand spit (Chinepouweru) which forms the southern tip of Waikouaiti beach (see sketch map), and laid siege to the pa. The investment was inconclusive, and is said to have lasted for six months, during which time Taoka shifted his camp across the river.



The defenders were well provisioned, having, apart from their stores, abundant sea food at their disposal. On the eastern coast of the peninsula is a little rocky cove, called Butterfly Bay (Te Awa Mokihī) from which the defenders could launch fishing canoes in all but easterly gales. In the estuary, within a hundred yards of the isthmus, are large beds of pipi and cockle. Middens show plenty of barracouta and groper bones and only a moderate amount of pipi, cockle and paua shell.

The necessity of building a pa on high ground frequently deprived the defenders of an adequate fresh water supply. At Huriawa they were provided with two springs. A larger one known as Te Puna Wai a Te Wera lay halfway along the northern side, and traditionally had a covered trench down to it to conceal the water carriers, suggesting that it may have been outside the palisade. A small pond used to exist above it in all but the driest spells, but this was drained by an earth movement 18 years ago. On the

southern side at the end of Puketeraki Beach a smaller spring seeps out over the bank from a swampy area.

European occupation has obliterated most traces of ancient occupation in the area, but one may suppose that use was made of the high ground on the isthmus for defence.

The long northern side of the peninsula appears to be the most vulnerable as it is possible to wade the river at low tide. A survey made in the 1840's shows a greater depth of water in the channel than today. This side would still have been exposed to assault by canoe, and, according to tradition, a palisade ran along the whole of its length. The southern and eastern sides are naturally fortified, being rock bound, rising in steep banks, and exposed to the surf.

Evidence of earthworks occurs in two areas marked A and B on the sketch map. Area A, commanding the landward approaches and the northern shore, shows evidence of a wall, and is scarped and terraced. These terraces near the top of the central hill on the landward side appear much too long for ordinary whare sites. This is a natural vantage point and the area shows the greatest amount of modification. Tradition places the main gate in this area, but its position is not clear from surface examination. On the crest of the ridge is a pit which may have been used for food storage. From the hill a ditch and ridge follow a fairly straight line along the base of a natural scarp towards the sea on the southern coast. This is a striking feature of apparently little military advantage, and it may be a natural pressure ridge. Proper investigation will provide the answer.

Area B above the harbour entrance appears to have considerable terracing, but without excavation it is impossible to determine to what extent this is the result of human activity as against natural slumping in places modified by man. For that reason, the shaded area B should be regarded as provisional only. It should be noted, however, that with one exception the terraces are small and about the size required for a whare.

In the basin to the north of area B, the sides of which are partly terraced, and on the banks above Te Awa Mokihi, are the most extensive occupational deposits. As elsewhere on the site, these consist of thin layers of midden material which have been little disturbed. Nearby, in the cliff called Maukoroa, the inhabitants traditionally obtained red ochre to make paint.

Apart from the trial excavation by Mr M.M. Trotter and myself reported below, no organised digging has been undertaken at the site. It has received some attention from curio hunters, but it is under the control of a domain board which affords general protection and in the years I have known the site little damage has been done.

PART II: A TRIAL EXCAVATION

M.M. TROTTER

During an investigation of the surface features of the Huriawa Peninsula, Karitane, Otago, in 1956, Stewart Mackay and I made an excavation through the main defensive wall of Pa a Te Wera in area A.

The Huriawa Peninsula is composed of a sandstone and mudstone formation¹, which is particularly prone to slumping. The effects of such earth movements, which have been fully described elsewhere², is that terracettes³ are formed by backward rotated