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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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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

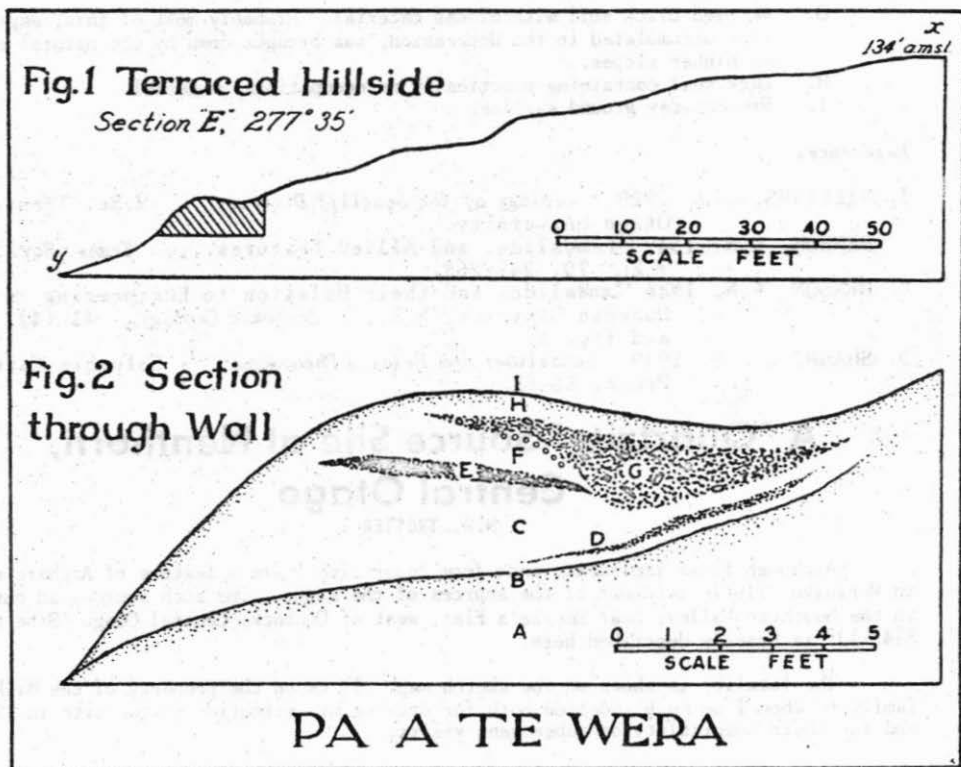
M.M. TROTTER

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

slump strips, especially on slopes steeper than 10° . These would require only modification to be suitable as habitational terraces, such as are a feature of many similar sites. However, on more gentle slopes, habitational terraces are generally of artificial origin.

The wall that we investigated defends the site from landward attack, other sides being surrounded by cliffs and sea (see sketch map). The excavation was made to determine whether it was a built-up wall, or merely a ditch in the hill-side giving the appearance of a wall on its down-hill side (see fig.1, section E), and if it was a built-up wall, to what extent it was based on a natural feature.



The result of our excavation, shown in fig.2, was that (a) the wall was constructed on top of the edge of a natural terracette; (b) no ditch was dug behind it into the original ground surface, and (c) the natural batter of the upper layers of the wall (layers E and F) was filled on the inside by a midden layer (G) which was probably derived from terracettes higher up the slope behind it. There was no evidence that this midden layer filled a deliberately cut ditch. The validity of these conclusions, however, needs to be tested by further excavation.

Details of stratification in order of deposition are:

- A. Virgin Clay
- B. Original ground surface, the humus-stained soil containing some midden material.
- C. Mottled clay which was deposited on the original surface to form the wall. It was probably obtained when levelling natural terracettes to make occupational terraces higher up the slope.
- D. Dark soil stratum in the mottled clay. Its interest lies in the fact that it shows the first stage in building the wall.
- E. Lens of midden material - shells, bones, charcoal and burnt stones. This shows the shape of the wall in a further stage of construction.
- F. Mottled clay as 'C' above, but containing concretions (probably calcareous) in top.
- G. Mottled black soil with midden material. Probably most of this, especially that accumulated in the depression, was brought down by the natural erosion of higher slopes.
- H. Dark soil containing practically no occupational material.
- I. Present-day ground surface.

References

1. WILLIAMS, G.J. 1929 *Geology of the Seacliff District*, M.Sc. Thesis, Otago University.
- BENSON, W.N. 1942 'Landslides and Allied Features...', *Trans. Roy. Soc. N.Z.*, 70, 249-263.
2. BENSON, W.N. 1946 'Landslides and their Relation to Engineering in the Dunedin District, N.Z.', *Economic Geology*, 41 (4), 338 and fig. 6.
3. SHARP, C.F.S. 1939 *Landslides and Related Phenomena*, Columbia University Press, 68-69.

A "Quartzite" Source Site at Nenthorn, Central Otago

M.M. TROTTER

Although flake implements made from 'quartzite' are a feature of Archaic sites in Murihiku, little is known of the sources of the stone. One such source, an outcrop in the Nenthorn Valley, near Macrae's Flat, west of Dunback, Central Otago (Site no: S145/1)² is briefly described here.

The locality is shown on the sketch map. It is on the property of the Wilkinson family to whom I am much indebted both for drawing my attention to the site in 1956 and for their hospitality on subsequent visits.

There is a variety of grades of stone in the outcrop, caused both by the degree of baking, and the fineness of the original sandstone. Colours vary from white to red. The material chosen for working was mostly hard, fine-grained, and of a buff colour.

Weathering has effectively broken off lumps of 'quartzite' weighing from a few ounces to several hundredweight. No actual quarrying appears to have taken place here, but small boulders could have been broken into workable sized pieces by dropping or throwing them from the top of the outcrop on to the stone lying below. However, weathering has destroyed any evidence of this having been done.