



NEW ZEALAND  
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## ARCHAEOLOGY IN NEW ZEALAND



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A search was conducted of about 10 probable adits in the area, on 23 September 2012, and photos, GPS waypoints, etc., were collected. The site is now recorded as S13/151.

## History

The Waikare, or Rangiriri, Gold Rush, as it variously became known, appears to have been precipitated by a geological report of the northern Waikato produced by Captain F.W. Hutton, on contract to the NZGS, in 1867. Hutton stated:

As I wish to be clearly understood on this very important point, I will repeat that I think it possible, but not probable, that auriferous quartz veins will be found in the range running from behind Waikare Lake, through Pukemore, Rangiuru, Taupiri, Pukewhau, and Hakarimata, to Te Kapamahanga, but it is quite hopeless ever to expect to find any alluvial gold field in this district (AJHR 1867 D-05).

Despite Hutton's very careful wording, the major gold strike at Thames in August 1867 meant that gold fever was rife, and prospectors flocked to the Waikare area, greatly encouraged by hyperbole in the news media of the time. For example, the *Daily Southern Cross*, of 25 June 1868 reported:

We are glad to be able to inform our readers that at length there is every probability of the Waikato country contributing another addition to our present payable goldfields. For the last two or three years there have been intermittent rumours to the effect that gold had been found in several localities in the neighbourhood of Rangiriri but the reports invariably died away after occasioning the usual nine days' wonder. For the past two weeks the rumours have again been revived, gaining in force and circumstantiality [sic] day by day, until actual specimens of gold-bearing quartz were ultimately received in town, and duly exhibited to a favoured few, and the exact locality made known to be near Lake Waikare.

Note that Hutton's words "...possible, but not probable" have been transformed to "...every probability." Much was also made of the supposed close proximity to the Thames goldfield, and the similarity in the geology of the two areas. The same *Daily Southern Cross* article stated:

It is said that from the hills adjacent to the lake the smoke can be discerned from the crushing machines on the Thames goldfield, and that the town of Shortland itself can be distinguished, as well as the tents upon the ranges, which latter appear like white specks in the distance by the aid of the telescope. The distance of Shortland from Lake Waikare is about thirty miles as the crow flies, and the main line of

reef at this latter place is said to run in the same direction as that borne by many of the best reefs at Shortland and Tapu Creek.

The Thames area would definitely not be visible from the tops of the hills immediately east of Lake Waikare; the Hapuakohe Ranges would be in the way. Also, the relevance of the reefs running in the same direction is not readily apparent, and the fact that Tapu is about 30 km from Shortland was obviously not appreciated by the reporter!

The actual number of prospectors and support people who reached the Waikare area and searched for gold varies from a couple of dozen, to hundreds, depending on the state of excitement of the various reporters. Various descriptions indicated that most of the prospecting activity took place in the area to the east of Lake Waikare, especially where the hills descend steeply to the lake shore (which includes the area of Ellmers' farm). Quartz samples were transported to Auckland for assaying, but it appears the results were unfavorable, as nothing was heard of the outcome, and the "rush" petered out a few months after it started.

Under the Goldfields Act (1866) the Superintendent of the Auckland Province had the authority to declare the area a "goldfield" with the attendant provisions (miners' licences, registration of claims, etc.) but it appears this was never done, so the Rangiriri/Waikare "goldfield" actually wasn't one! Nevertheless, it represents a significant episode in New Zealand gold mining and Waikato history, and the location of adits remaining from this period presented a good opportunity to record the site.

A summary of historical references located was attached to the SRF as a separate document.

### **Survey, September 2012**

The author visited the Ellmers' farm on 23 Sept 2012, and was taken on a tour of about ten probable adits by Fiona Ellmers. These are spread along the side of the escarpment running down to the shore of Lake Waikare; mostly on the Ellmers farm, but with a couple on the property of their neighbours to the south. The longest adit is about 40 m long, with a 1 m deep shaft in about the middle, with 1 m adits off the sides of the shaft. The adit has a bend of about 30 degrees left, about 30 m from the entrance.

The other eight or nine adits are of lengths varying from about 1 m to about 10 m, and two have collapsed.

While in the area, the opportunity was taken to visit S13/62, a pa site, on the lake shore approx 300 m NNW of the Ellmers' homestead. This was recorded by Tony Walton in 1981, based on a 1949 air photo. A walk-around was conducted, but no obvious signs of a defended pa were located. It may



*Figure 2. Entrance to longest adit (WP563), approx. 40 m long.*



*Figure 3. Adit approx. 5 m long.*

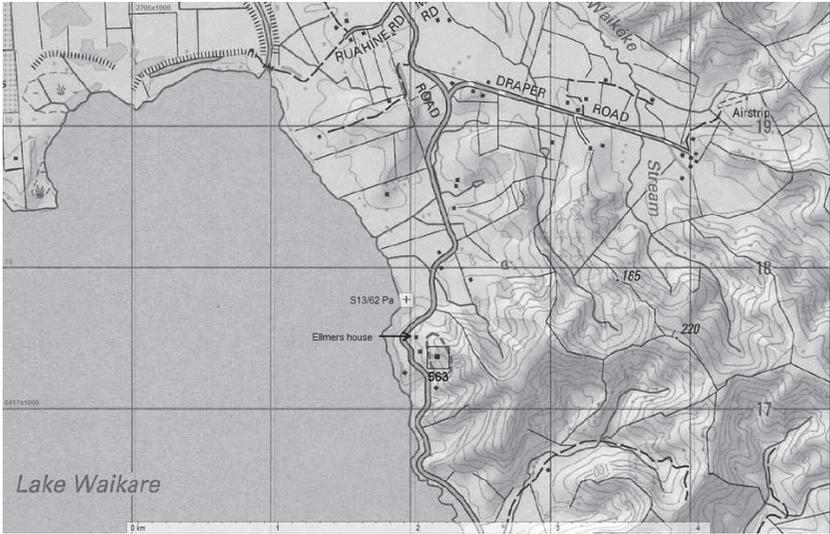


Figure 4. TUMONZ topographical map showing GPS waypoint and S13/62 pa



Figure 5. Google Earth showing the Ellmers farm area. The outer red line roughly bounds the area where the adits are located.

have been a kainga site, however, as there were level areas that could have been garden terraces. There are also a number of loquat trees growing close to the lake shore. (Fiona Ellmers later checked with a representative of the family that own the land the pa is recorded as being on, and she confirmed that it was a pa and burial site, although she wasn't aware of the details. To be investigated further.)

### **Site Significance**

As stated previously, there were no significant finds of gold, or any mineral, in the Rangiriri/Waikare area. However, it was a significant event in local Waikato, and Auckland provincial, history, and should be regarded in that light. It is probably unfortunate that the remaining adits are on private property, or else a short loop walk, with interpretation, may have been appropriate.

Another aspect considered to be significant is the fact that the site was reported by a member of the public (in this case, a local landowner), who managed to eventually contact the author after putting in a query via Kae Lewis' goldminers database, on her web site at <http://www.kaelewis.com/>. In the author's experience, while recording remote sites such tramways and mining infrastructure, many 'locals' have been encountered who have knowledge of potential archaeological sites or artefacts. It is suggested that some sort of formalized mechanism for capturing and evaluating this information may be of value. A moderated "blog" (web-log) may be suitable – this will be discussed and investigated further.