



NEW ZEALAND  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION

**NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER**



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NORTH TARANAKI - New Plymouth

(The Archaeological Club associated with the Taranaki Museum will be returning to the swamps at Waitara to continue the excavations so successfully commenced last summer. As yet no archaeological field recording has been carried out but it is hoped that this too will become a part of the club's organised activities. - Ed.)

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SOUTH TARANAKI - by A.G.Buist, Hawera

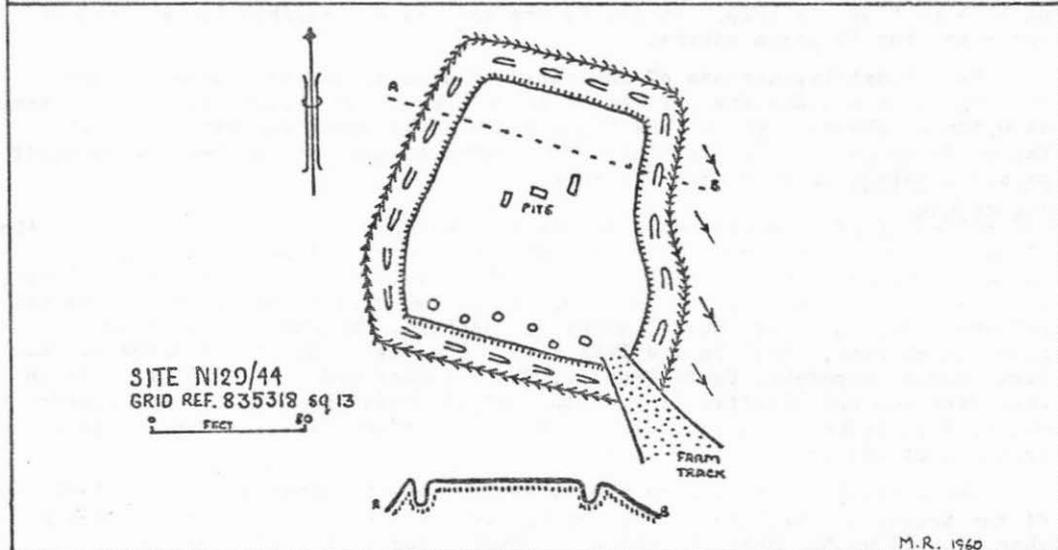
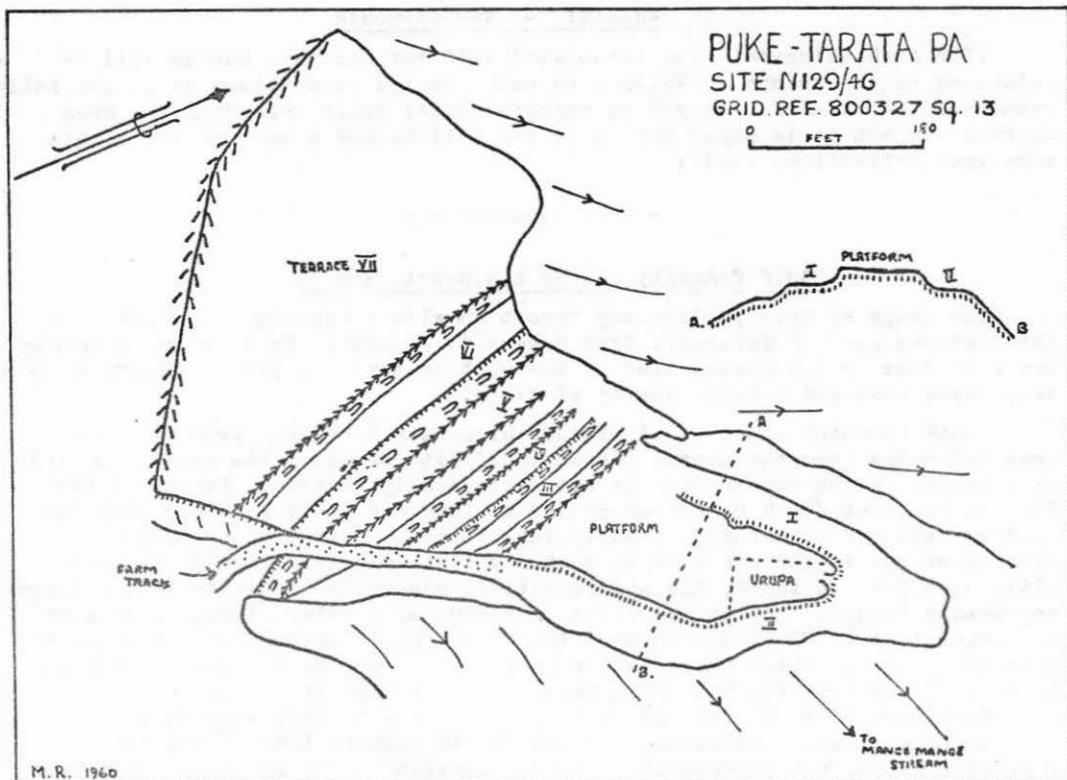
The scope of this preliminary report on site recording is confined to the southern part of Taranaki, from Hawera to Opunake. To date no recording has been done by the Association in the west or northern areas, though tourist trips have revealed a high density of sites.

South Taranaki consists of plains which have been free from bush for some 2-5 miles from the coast, for an indefinite period. The reason for this open nature of the countryside is not geologically certain. Forest timber lies at no great depth below the ground surface and it is possible that the land was cleared by burning by early inhabitants. Evidences of a high density of population are clearly seen. Whilst kainga (villages) and bush sites have left no trace, the numerous field monuments indicate that a large population occupied the area. Within a radius of 6 miles of Hawera we have recorded at least 80 fortified pa sites and there is documentary evidence of over 20 kainga of which there is now no trace. Percy Smith states that, in 1858, whilst travelling back from Taupo .... "I should think that from Waitotara to Omata (some 100 miles) there is a fortified pa at an average of every 10 miles, and each would contain 100-200 people". This is a gross, but pardonable, under-estimation for he spent only two days on this part of the trip. In the Hawera area it is possible to see from any one site, one to seven others.

Unfortunately, because of the rapid erosion of the coastline, coastal fishing sites are now few. Three of these are of particular interest; Te Namu at Opunake, Ohawetoktoko at the Waingongoro River mouth and Waimate at the Kapune River mouth. The last of these, Waimate, consists of two island cliff pa and a kainga area of some ten acres.

TRADITIONS; Traditionally the area has been occupied by the Ngati Ruanui tribe since the fleet, the tribe being one of the two founded by members of the Aotea canoe, under the command of Turi who settled finally on the Patea River. There is also unequivocal evidence of occupation during the Archaic phase of culture. Hapu of Ngati Ruanui were: Nga Ruahine, Tangahoe, Ngati Tipara, Ngati Manuhiakai, Ngati Tu and Paka Kohi. The divisions of the Tangahoe hapu were: Hamua, Hapotoki, Ngati Tanewai, Ngati Tupaea and Ngati Hine (This is an amplification and clarification of the tribal divisions recorded by S. Percy Smith. I am indebted to John Houston for this information). These various branches of the tribe remain as entities today.

The present generation is not on the whole very clear about the traditions of the tribe, the frequent retort being "I wish I had listened to my father when he told us things". For various reasons the tribe suffered many



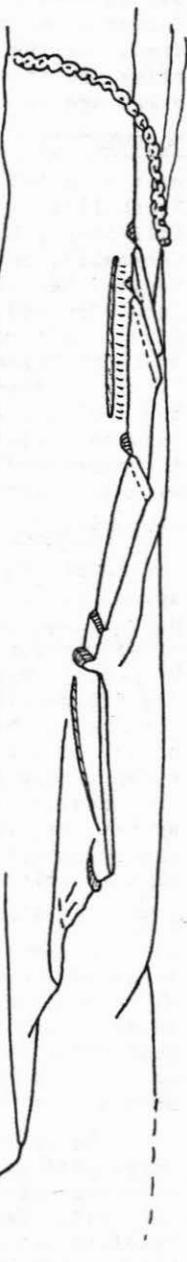
adversities in the early and middle eighties and tribal coherence, no doubt, was lost. The tribe was, in part, defeated during the early intertribal musket raids. After colonial wars of occupation the whole of coastal Taranaki was confiscated under the Native Land Settlement Act of 1863 and the events of the next twenty years did not make the Maori any more anxious to relay the traditions of the tribe to the pakeha. Tribal history and place names are lost forever.

**DOCUMENTATION:** This is extensive, if not comprehensive. The earliest and most detailed account of two sites (Te Namu and Waimate) is found in W.B. Marshall's "A Personal Narrative of Two Visits to N.Z. in the H.M.S. Alligator", London, Nisbet 1836. Extracts of this are in Well's "History of Taranaki", Seffern's "Garden of New Zealand" and in W.H. Skinner's "Pioneer Medical Men of Taranaki". S. Percy Smith recorded a great deal of traditional knowledge and history in "History and Traditions of the Taranaki Coast". Elsdon Best recorded (in the archaeological sense) only Te Namu and Waimate pa in South Taranaki in "The Pa Maori", though several other sites are mentioned by way of reference. Cowan's "The New Zealand Wars" documents the area in the 1860's very fully. John Houston, of Hawera, published a full and valuable account of pa sites near Hawera in the Hawera Star in the early 1930's. An unexpectedly unfruitful document is Robert's "History of Hawera and the Waimate Plains".

**PRESERVATION of SITES:** Easy access by agricultural machinery has resulted in the obliteration of a number of sites. Owing to the soft nature of the volcanic soils, all sites are eroded to some extent. Banks are usually reduced to an undulation but some still stand at 8 feet. Ditches suffer from silting by eroding banks and scarps though some are recorded with a depth of 12 feet and have perpendicular scarps still intact. Semi-subterranean rectangular pits are frequently well preserved; these are of two types - a shallow, flat-bottomed possible house site and a sloping-sided, narrow-bottomed deeper type of unknown use. On sites where these are well preserved, usually one only is rimmed. Subterranean circular pits are invariably in a collapsed state and are easily confused with semi-subterranean circular pits. At Te Namu and Waimate pa, these pits are well preserved having been cut into hard stony agglomerate. Sites which have been levelled by farming may still be visible in the early spring owing to the differential rate of grass growth.

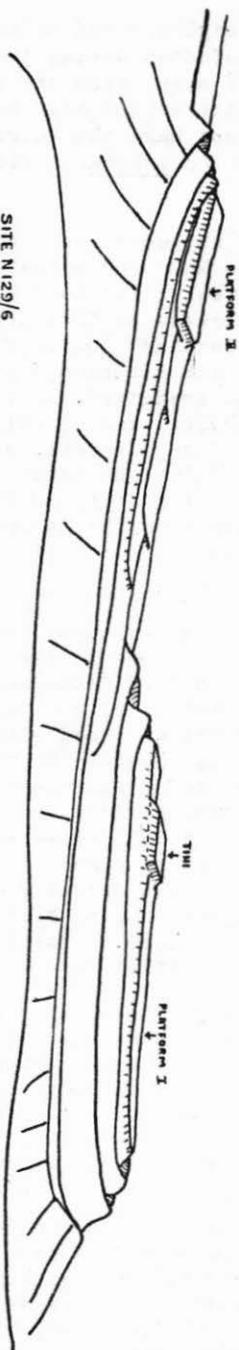
**TYPES of SITE:** Except for the swamp pa, all types of pa sites occur with a notable preponderance of headland sites, possibly due to the fact that headlands into rivers and streams are a common topographical feature. Of the 80 sites mentioned, 12 occupy an area of 3 acres or more. The remainder diminish in size down to 80ft. 'squares', only two of the smaller of these being clearly gunfighter sites - the purpose and age of the others remains to be determined, as they form no part of local tradition and are, without exception, unnamed. Such a site is illustrated - N129/44, headland pa of upland variety.

The 12 large sites vary in complexity with the nature of the terrain. 2 large hill pa, Ohangai (N129/10) and Te Puru (N129/25), consist of a single platform defended by ditches, bank and terraces extending around the slope of the hill. Terraces alone are not common defensive structures. Ridge and headland sites are more complex, the defences being both lateral and transverse ditches and banks, often in series, enclosing large areas of flattened terrain



SITE N129/50  
 GRID REF. 500329 SQ 13  
 PUKE-TI PA  
 FROM THE WEST  
 N.T.S. TOTAL LENGTH 350 yds. APPROX. AREA 3ACRES.

AFTER W. MUMFORD 1959

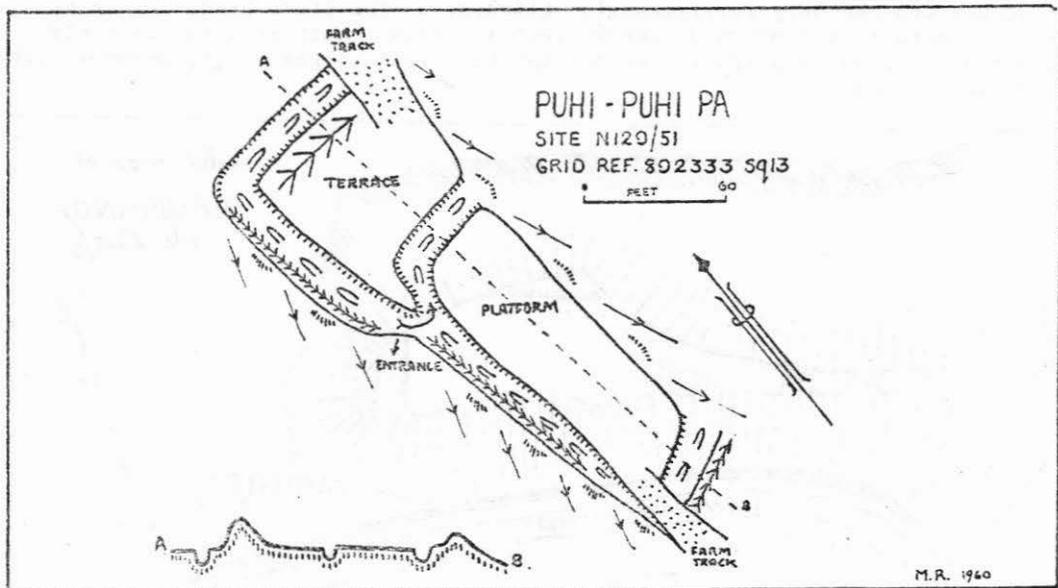


SITE N129/6  
 GRID REF. 510229 + SQ 13  
 TE RUAKI PA  
 FROM THE SOUTH  
 N.T.S. TOTAL LENGTH 350 yds. APPROX. AREA 4 ACRES.

R.A.B. 1960

for which a term is yet to be devised. Puke-ti(N129/50), Puke-Tarata(N129/46) and Puhi-Puhi(N129/51) are headland pa while Te Ruaki(N129/6) is a large complicated ridge site relying on natural bluffs along the whole of the north side.

Most of the sites, large and small, rely to a greater or lesser extent on natural defences. The majority of sites, however, are overlooked by higher hills making them vulnerable to musket and cannon fire. Cowan has recorded military action against several fortified pa in this area(eg. Cowan vol.2, p.66) but in no instance was the pa able to resist attack, no doubt owing to this exposure. Such was not the case in the great bush sites such as Te Ngutu o Te Manu where the attacking military forces were readily and ignominiously defeated. Evidence available to date would lead us to the conclusion that the gun-fighting Maori relied very little on these fortified sites but rather, used hastily constructed defensive positions of which little or nothing remains today. The only pa to resist the onslaughts of the first musket raids from the Waikato Maoris in the early 1830's were Te Namu, Waimate and Araukuku pa, all extremely strong topographically - there was no occasion to attack these pa during the wars of occupation.



**FURTHER RESEARCH:** When the task of recording is completed, the most pressing problem to solve will be the nature and purpose of the numerous small defended sites. Owing to the extensive middens present on most of the large sites, an exploration and analysis of these is a further research project. This may lead to the discovery of more Archaic phase occupation in areas remote from Waingongoro. At the moment our group of four, plus children, has its hands full.