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TAUHINU SITE SURVEY

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Abstract

A small pa at Greenhithe, Auckland was surveyed and mapped. The pa is described and a brief history and discussion is given.

Following an initial investigation, a site survey of Tauhinu pa (N42/289), in the Auckland district of Greenhithe, was conducted in June 1973. This small pa overlooks the western expanse and the entrance to the northern reaches of the upper Waitemata Harbour (see Figure 1). It is situated on a small coastal ridge, about 33 metres above sea level, on the northern headland at the mouth of Hellyer's Creek (also known as Oruamo Creek). The grid reference is N.Z.M.S. N42: 198682. Access to the site is via an easy 15-minute walk, from the nearest road, through secondary bush.

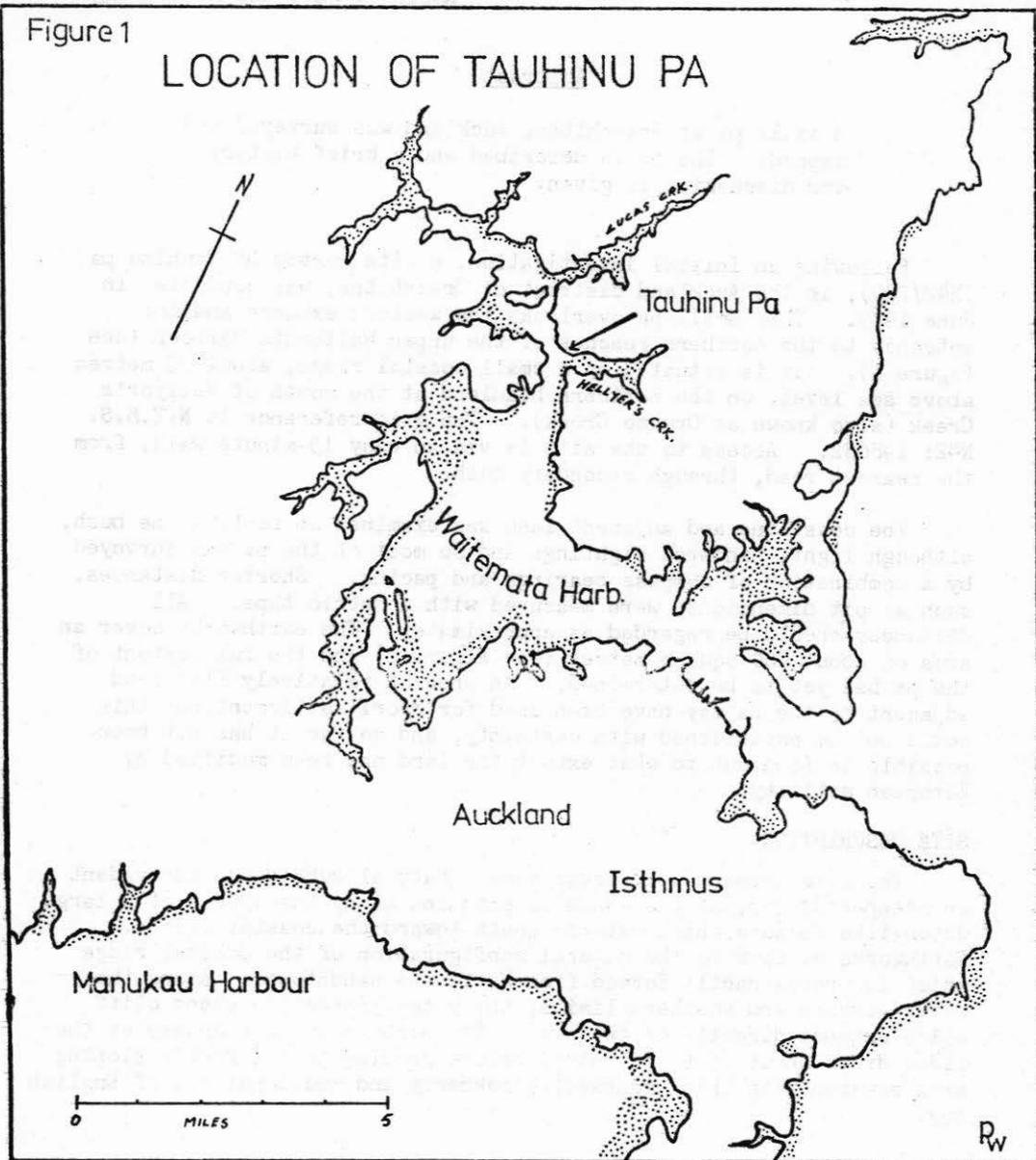
The coastline and adjacent land was examined on foot. The bush, although light, hindered sightings and so most of the pa was surveyed by a combination of compass bearings and pacing. Shorter distances, such as pit dimensions, were measured with a metric tape. All distances should be regarded as approximate. The earthworks cover an area of about 400 square metres (see Figure 2) and the full extent of the pa has yet to be determined. An area of relatively flat land adjacent to the pa may have been used for Maori settlement but this could not be established with certainty, and so far it has not been possible to find out to what extent the land has been modified by European activity.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The site appears well preserved. Natural subsidence is evident on steeper slopes, at the edges of pits and along the course of a large ditch-like feature which extends south toward the coastal cliffs. Earthworks conform to the natural configuration of the coastal ridge which is predominantly formed from Waitemata sandstone. Along the south-eastern and southern limits, the ridge presents a steep cliff which extends directly to the sea. The north-eastern boundary of the ridge drops about 15 to 20 metres before grading into a gently sloping area covered with thick grasses, blackberry and small patches of English ivy.

Figure 1

LOCATION OF TAUHINU PA



The secondary vegetation covering the site includes exotic and indigenous species. The most noticeable of the exotics are stands of *Pinus radiata*, some of which rise about 15 metres above the canopy layer of the surrounding indigenous vegetation. A line of *Pinus radiata*, about 20 metres north-east of the pa, extends inland, presumably marking a boundary to the property on which the pa is situated. The age of the pine stands is not yet known.

The indigenous vegetation is represented by species such as:
Ferns: *Dicksonia* sp., *Polypodium diversifolium*, *Asplenium* spp.;
Small tress: e.g., young *Metrosideros excelsa*, *Griselinia lucida*,
Coprosma spp., *Hebe* sp., and young stands of *Suttonia australis*.
Mature *M. excelsa* dominates the canopy layer along the coastal fringes.

The earthworks at Tauhinu can be viewed in two sections (see Figure 2): a small flat triangular area, and the knoll containing pits. Features which may be identified among the earthworks include a ditch, two drains, three pits and what appears to have been a short rampway.

The two sections of the pa are separated by a shallow hollow about 3 to 4 metres wide which, on the southern side of the ridge, becomes continuous with a large steep ditch extending southward to the coastal cliffs where the shape of the ditch rapidly peters out. Along the edges of the ditch natural erosion of the weathered sandstone, accelerated by the steep slope, is evident in many places and no doubt contributed toward making the ditch wider than it was originally. When seen in relation to the two drains located along the northern edge of the earthworks we feel that this naturally widened ditch represents the course of a large drain for carrying away the surface rainfall.

Two clearly defined drains running parallel to the northern edges of the earthworks cause surface runoff to flow in opposite directions as arrowed in Figure 2. The drains are not continuous with each other.

So far the only pits that have been found on, or near, the site are situated on the highest ground of the ridge and have an average depth of .5 metre. The largest, Pit A, has a floor area of 13 square metres. Pits B and C are slightly smaller with a floor area of about 11 square metres. There is very little topsoil and the pits have been shaped directly out of sandstone. Because of the time available, no excavations were made to investigate the function of these pits. If excavation is undertaken, some difficulty is likely to be experienced with tree roots.

From the northern edge of the knoll, common with the balk between pits A and B, what appears to be a short rampway links the earthworks

with the adjacent flat area. This rampway extends down into the drain and partially obliterates it.

During the examination of the site and its environs, no shell midden was found even though the tidal estuary of Hellyer's Creek presumably offered at least one source of marine food, e.g., *Chioni* sp., as it does today. That midden might be found beneath the dense mat of grasses is quite likely.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SITE

The following historical account of Tauhinu is largely taken from a letter written by George Graham in 1908 to Mr Eric Craig, the developer of "Tauhinu Park". Graham's informant was an "elderly woman of Ngatiwhanaunga of Hauraki, who also be descended in lineage from the Ngatiwhatua and Ngatipaoa tribes is well versed in the history of her people." The letter is held in the library of the Auckland Institute and Museum.

The original inhabitants of Tauhinu pa were the Kawerau people, a sub-tribe of the Ngatiwhatua. The name "Tau-hinu" itself is the name of a plant commonly found in the scrub at Greenhithe. Like many Maori settlements in the Auckland district, most of the known history of Tauhinu is associated with a chequered career of warfare.

The geographical location of the pa, together with its local source of marine food, made the place strategically desirable and Tauhinu is first mentioned in connection with Kapetawa's war expedition against the Tamaki people. Later, during the raids on the Ngatiwhatua by Tamaki-Kiwi, the powerful chief of Maungakekei (One Tree Hill), Tauhinu was attacked but not taken. The Ngatiwhatua retaliated and eventually defeated Tamaki-Kiwi, taking control of the Auckland Isthmus.

A dispute over fishing grounds with the Ngatipaoa (a Hauraki tribe) resulted in war with Tauhinu being captured. A few years later the Ngatiwhatua were able to drive out the Ngatipaoa to occupy the pa until the Ngapuhi raids swept south from Northland. Although the pa was well garrisoned, the few guns which the Ngatiwhatua possessed could not match the armoury of the Ngapuhi. Tauhinu pa was destroyed, forcing the Ngatiwhatua to disperse, eventually resettling themselves in the Mahurangi area (Warkworth district).

Another raid, in the 1830s, led by Te Parawhau of Whangarei, drove the Ngatiwhatua from Mahurangi, south, back to the upper reaches of the Waitemata Harbour. Led by Te Kawau, the Ngatiwhatua were able to re-occupy and hold Tauhinu pa until the Treaty of Waitangi, when peace was assured for the region.

By 1898 much of the land in Greenhithe had become subdivided into 10-acre and five-acre farm blocks which were sold under the Crown Grant system of the day. In the same year Mr Charles Cooper purchased a subdivision which included a portion of Tauhinu pa. Three years later his wife bought a further four subdivisions which included the remainder of the pa. In 1905 Mrs Cooper sold 25 acres of this property to her father, Mr Eric Craig (to whom Graham wrote). In the 1930s the land was taken over by the New Zealand Army for military purposes.

DISCUSSION

Although these earthworks have been called Tauhinu pa, it is more than likely that this site represents only a small part of Tauhinu pa proper. On one early map of the Auckland Isthmus, the whole coastal headland is labelled as "Tauhinu". According to Graham, Tauhinu not only held a politically strategic position but it also commanded the immediate foreshore which was a source of supply for shark and shell fishing expeditions. If this were the case, and a conservative estimate for effective population was about 200 years, some evidence of shell midden deposits might be expected, especially along the coastal borders. From this site midden has not been found. Northward, further round the coast toward Lucas Creek where the land does not meet the sea in steep cliffs, midden is found in abundance and it is in the immediate vicinity of food supply that most of the population probably lived. In this area there is also evidence of prehistoric earthworks (garden walls ?) but these have yet to be investigated properly.

A difficult question to answer is: to what extent has European activity modified the landscape? Following Maori occupation, the land has been cleared. In the latter half of the 1800s, gum-diggers were active in the district, burning off bush to get at the kauri gum; the first owners had cleared portions of the land at different times to build two cottages; Eric Craig attempted to develop "Tauhinu Park"; and, lastly, who knows what the New Zealand Army got up to?

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