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THACKER'S REDOUBT, MANAWAPOU, SOUTH TARANAKI

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Redoubts of the Maori War period appear to be excellent material for training in archaeological techniques, it being possible to correlate the results with documentary rather than traditional records. The imminent destruction of an Imperial Army camping area precipitates the publication of this paper; the publication this year of a site record of a similar redoubt in the Auckland area by P. Bellwood (1968) illustrates that these monuments are not unique and conform to a standard pattern. It is likely that similarly well-preserved redoubt earthworks remain in other areas.

In late 1864, after the Waikato Campaign and after months of political argument by the Whitaker and Weld governing parties, Sir George Grey as Governor of New Zealand ordered General Cameron, commander of the Imperial Forces, to take military occupation of two blocks of the confiscated Taranaki land (Dalton 1967: 218, et seq.). The objective was to secure a road from Wanganui to New Plymouth, and to allow the survey of the land for settlement. In January 1865, Brig. Gen. Waddy set out from Wanganui and, together with subsequent reinforcements, threw up redoubts at places on the coast where it was considered possible to land supplies from the sea. These redoubts were placed in the charge of the Royal Irish Regiment under Lt Col. A. A. Chapman; one of his officers was Lieut. W. F. Thacker and another Capt. J. Inman (G. le M. Gretton 1911: chapt. 9).

A redoubt was placed on each bank of the main rivers between Wanganui and South Taranaki, 11 being occupied by the end of March 1865. Most of these remained garrisoned, ultimately by Colonial troops until the end of the West Coast Maori War in 1870. The earthworks of six of these remain reasonably well preserved today.

At the mouth of the Manawapou River the two redoubts became known as Thacker's and Inman's. There was a large deserted unfortified Maori village on the cliff top on the left bank of the river; in this village the large meeting-house Taiporohenui had been erected for a meeting of the tribes in 1854 to discuss and oppose the sale of Taranaki lands to the Europeans. On the high land above the old village Thacker's redoubt was thrown up to hold 100 men, whilst Inman's on the opposite bank held 150 men. Thacker's is now in part threatened, and Inman's wholly threatened with destruction by the Kapuni Gas Pipeline construction.

The site is exposed, but there is shelter from the winds down gullies and river flats nearby. There is a strong spring of water just downhill south-east of the redoubt. The redoubt consists of a rectangular area 90 ft x 65 ft with rectangular flanking projections on the north-west and south-east corners (see Fig. 1). Both these rectangular projections (the foundations of caponiers, or block-houses) are 30 ft x 25 ft, although both are badly eroded by a subsequent ditch and bank fence-line, which runs through the platform from north to south. Apart from this erosion, the platform is featureless. There is an inner bank about two feet high; a break in this bank on the east side represents the probable entrance. The surrounding ditch is 25 ft wide and 6 ft deep, although a test pit reveals that the true bottom of the ditch is 2 ft below this present surface.

Thacker's Redoubt appears to be constructed on a standard formula for enclosed field works of parapet, made to shelter from 25 to 200 men. Captain H. W. Young of the 18th Royal Irish Regiment published a booklet (1869) apparently in response to the imminent threat on Wanganui by Titokawaru's forces. That the threat had passed by the time the booklet appeared is irrelevant here, for it is one of the few sources whereby field remains may be checked with presumed original constructions. Cowan (1955) has reproduced many plans of redoubts, but it is not always clear that he has managed to title the plans correctly; for instance, the plan titled "Manutahi Redoubt" on page 181, Vol. 2, may well be Thacker's Redoubt. Nevertheless, there does appear to have been a standard pattern, and H. W. Young describes it:

"The redoubt military is a square work, surrounded by a ditch which last is swept by caponiers in its opposite angles. These caponiers communicate with the interior by tunnels through the parapet, very tedious to construct. This work, however, when complete, is very strong, and perfectly flanked. The side of a redoubt should be no longer than 40 yds. Where a larger work is required, the bestioned-fort tracing should be used The entrance, be it noted, is in the least accessible face, that adjoining the cliff. For a bridge, a single plank will generally suffice. A draw-bridge, however, is safer, and saves the trouble of making a traverse or gate When a redoubt has a blockhouse in one corner, the faces of the redoubt not adjoining the blockhouse should be given a parapet sloping so gently outwards as to be swept from the upper loopholes of the blockhouse. Thus the redoubt can be left safely vacant, and fully defended by a few men in the blockhouse."

Whilst the redoubt itself has been described, there is no description of the surrounding camp. Studying the area surrounding Thacker's, as well as other redoubts, it is evident that the military establishment was not confined to the redoubt. In fact, it is likely that the redoubt was merely a refuge in time of attack, and that normally the garrison lived in tents and huts outside the walls. As well as the garrison, engineers, artillery corps and other regiments must have camped at least for short periods.

The pits, tracks, ditches and enclosed areas (see Fig. 2) are reduplicated (more or less as clearly) in the six other redoubts still remaining in the South Taranaki area. Whilst it can be assumed that some of the pits represent sunken houses, storage areas and latrines, and that the enclosed areas were possibly corrals for horses, there is one feature which is associated with every redoubt but has no obvious function: the ditch extension from one corner of the redoubt (Feature A, Fig. 1).

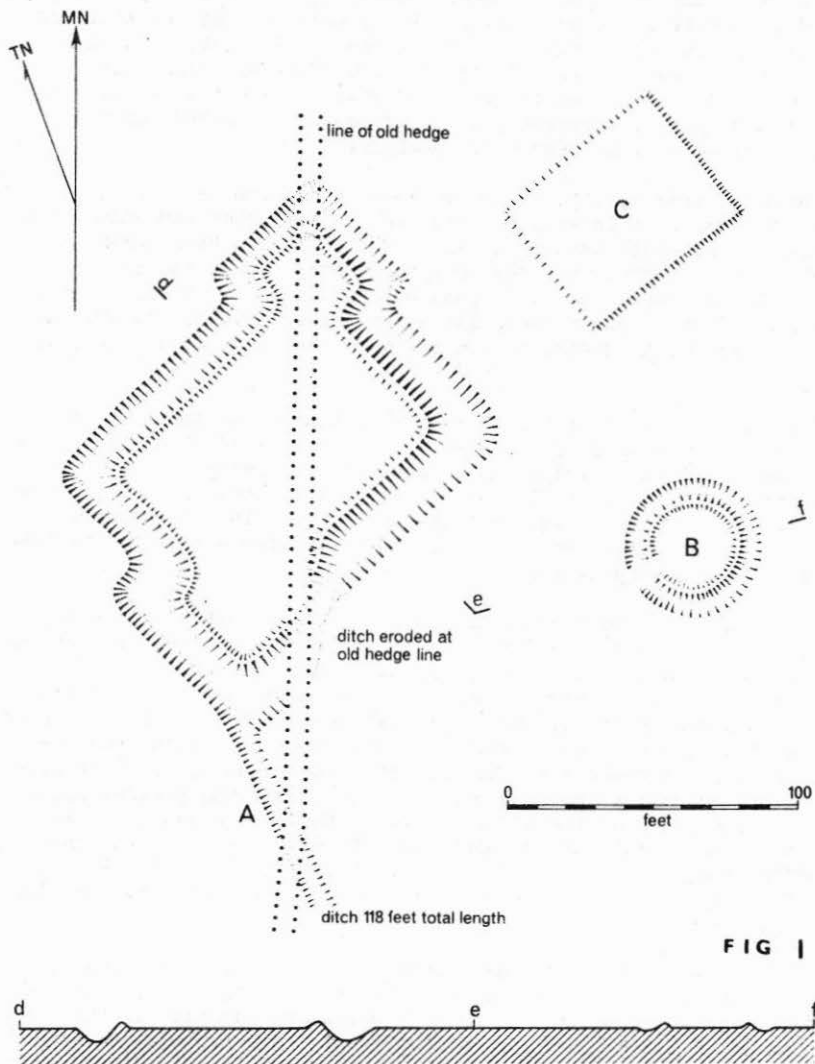
The first explanation for this ditch extension to spring to mind is that it acted as a drain. However, it was surely not necessary to prevent the ditch surrounding the redoubt from becoming a moat, nor, in the porous nature of the Taranaki soil, was it necessary to provide a run-off for water which wouldn't lie for long. In all redoubts recorded, the distal end of this ditch is associated with pits cut into the side of the nearby slopes.

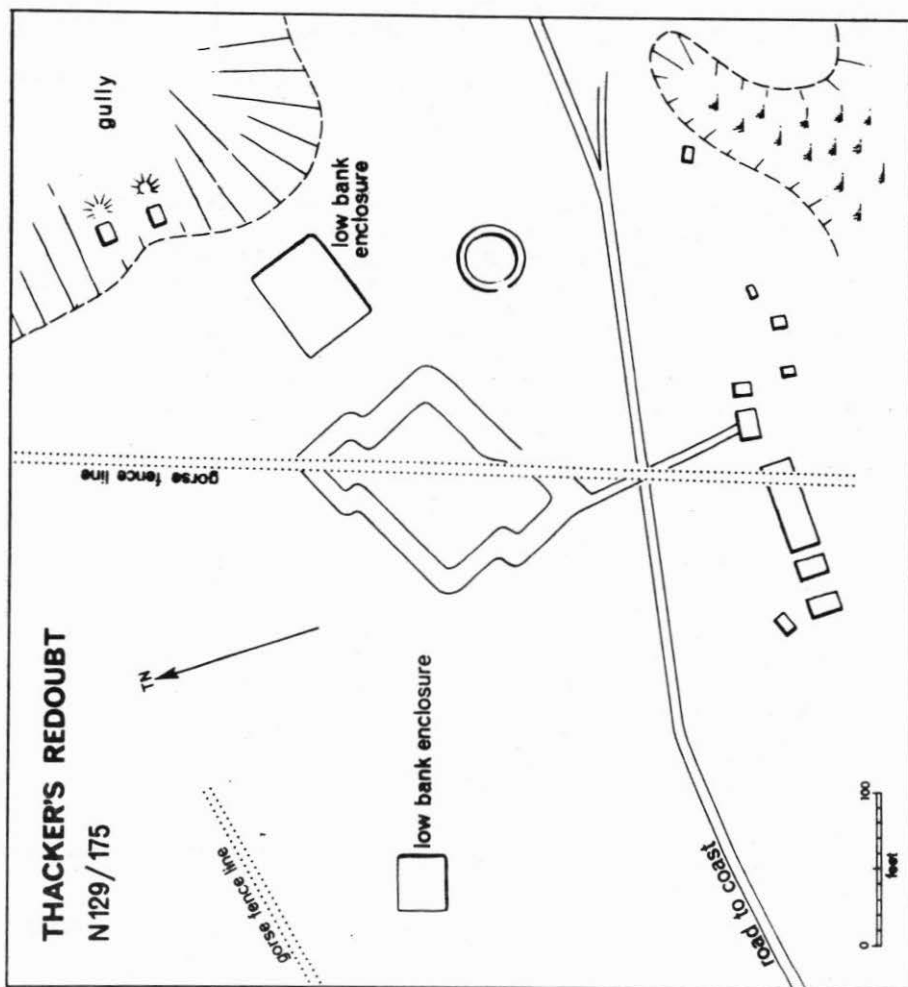
In an endeavour to clarify the function of the ditch extension, sections running across the ditch at Thacker's were excavated. At the north end of the ditch extension proximal to the redoubt, it was found that there was a steep scarp rising three feet from the true bottom of the redoubt ditch to the bottom of the extension ditch. The extension ditch was found to be covered with 4-6 ins. of fill, eroded from the sides; this having been cleared, the ditch was found to be 16 ft wide with a depth gradually increasing from 12 ins below the present outer edge to 2 ft 6 ins near the middle. Along the centre was an 18 ins wide, steep sided small ditch which was 3 ft 6 ins deep. From the fragmentary remains, and from the nature of the layers at the lateral edges of the wider ditch, it was clear that an outer bank had run along each side.

At the south end, a further transverse section was excavated and extended into the pit into which the ditch runs. Again it was found that there was a narrow deep ditch 3 ft below the surface and that there was a shallower wider ditch rising sharply at its outer edge to eroded outer banks. The excavation along the base of the deeper ditch revealed that it from 3 to 4 ft over a length of 7 ft 6 ins, and that this

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fall was not gradual but over two steps. There were two "surfaces" above the natural clay base, there being a layer of black beach sand on one of them. At a distance of 7 ft 6 ins into the surface pit the steps and bottom of the ditch suddenly fell away to a measured depth of 5 ft, but the natural bottom of the pit was not reached. The fill at this point contained pieces of rusted iron, broken glass and animal bones and teeth.

Whilst the small test excavation does not enable any firm conclusions to be drawn and does not disprove the possibility that the ditch was primarily a drain, it does suggest other possibilities. The width of the shallower ditch and the presence of lateral banks suggest that it was primarily a protected path to features intimately connected with the redoubt. The excavation of the distal end, although incomplete, suggests that this path was originally stepped down into a pit but that later this pit became filled with midden; it is of course possible that the pit was originally intended as a rubbish-tip or latrine and continued to be used as such, but it is unlikely that such a function would be intended in a pit which was the only access to adjacent pits on the hillside.

Feature B (Fig. 1) presents some difficulties in interpretation which excavation may elucidate. It is a circular flat area 31 ft in diameter, enclosed by a low bank and outer ditch which is absent on the side facing the redoubt. It was at first assumed to be associated with the redoubt, possibly as an enclosure for an Armstrong field gun; however, it has proved impossible to trace any documentary evidence for this interpretation. In view of the report of potato clamps as a feature of historic Maori agriculture (see Bellwood, this issue), it may be possible that this circular feature belongs to the earlier period of occupation in the area: there are groups of pits and quarries in the surrounding fields, but no similar circular enclosures.

Feature C (Fig. 1) is one of two rectangular areas enclosed by a low bank. It is suggested that these represent corrals for the large number of horses associated with the West Coast Campaign.

To the north-east of the redoubt, on the edge of a steep gully, are two small rectangular pits with small platforms built up to the level of the forward edges. Such a neat and secluded arrangement, with an aspect facing the morning sun sheltered from the prevailing westerly and cold southerly winds, suggests latrines for the rank. Similar rectangular pits overlooking a swamp on the cold slopes south-east of the redoubt were perhaps similar amenities for the file.

The other larger pits connected to the redoubt with ditch "A" also lie on the gentle south-east slope, these having steeply sloping

sides and a wide flat bottom which suggests that they were sunken and sheltered outhouses for semi-permanent houses or stores. The depression of the original road to the coast crosses the ditch "A", and it is likely that this was formed later than the ditch, although, unfortunately, the ditch and bank gorse fence line also meet at this point and obscure the surface remains of the earlier features.

Thacker's Redoubt is described because it is at the moment a particularly well-preserved example of an Imperial Redoubt and camp site which is similar to others on the West Coast. It is felt that such field monuments are worthy of the attention of New Zealand archaeologists.

I am indebted to Miss Win Mumford for preparing the figures from field notes, sketches and aerial photographs.

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