



NEW ZEALAND
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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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steep slope was made almost vertical during occupation of the Pa and the material of layer 2 may be derived during excavation of the vertical slope. The boulders of clay-glomerates quoted in layer 2 were derived from man-mixed clays formed during some earlier period of excavation and fill.

I would like to see more of layer 8 before being certain that this layer is natural or not. The charcoal present could be derived by erosion of earlier man-associated deposits.

THE POOR KNIGHTS ISLANDS

by

A. Leahy & E.M. Nicholls

The Poor Knights Islands lie 16 miles North East of the Whangarei Heads and 15 miles from the nearest point on the mainland. The group consists of two large islands; Tawhiti Rahi, covering about 318 acres, and Aorangi, approximately 163 acres. There are several smaller islets including the group.

Botany and Zoology

Botanically and zoologically the Islands are very interesting, because of their isolation. They have a very restricted range of plants with pohutukawa as the dominant tree. They are one of the few remaining areas where the Tuatara survives and, until recently, were the only known breeding-ground of the rare Buller's Shearwater. Until about twenty years ago there were wild pigs on Aorangi, but these were exterminated by a Government party sent to destroy them. There is no evidence for pigs on Tawhiti Rahi.

Geology

The Poor Knights are of volcanic origin and are "composed of Rhyolitic lava flows, breccias, and tuffs. They possibly represent the northern part of the Tectonic line which, further south, is marked by rhyolite out-pourings at Moko Hinau, Great Barrier, Cuvier and Colville". (Sumich 1955-6 : 64)

General Description

Tawhiti Rahi consists of two plateaus, one occupying the southern end, and a higher one which rises by a steepish cliff and then slopes gradually down towards the north. The whole island is surrounded by cliffs and landing on the island is possible only at two, or perhaps three, places where there are small indentations in the cliff. It is entirely covered by bush and scrub and there are no tracks except for the recently cleared but indistinct Marine Department track from the Eastern landing to the new lighthouse on the North East coast.

Aorangi is more circular island; the central part consists of a basin, that tips towards the sea to the North East, and a semi-circular rim of high cliffs leading to a plateau on the South West side. The North East end of the basin terminates in a sheer drop to the sea and all along the edge of this cliff are extensive areas of flax which reach up to the bush-line that begins about 200 yards from the cliff edge.

Bush covers the rest of the Island. Two areas of raupo have been reported but only one of these was found, situated in a boggy spot in front of a small cave about 100 yards around the rocks to the south of the camping ground at the North East landing.

History

Cook noted some small islands off Bream Head on 15th November 1769 but though named by him "The Poor Knights" it was a later interpolation and the reason for thus naming them was not given. (Beaglehole 1955:211 & note)

Although mentioned in many old journals as a land mark (e.g. Williams, 1836-40, pp. 108, 119, 202, 237, 243., Cruise. 1820. 140.) nothing further seems to have been recorded about them until Polack claimed them. He maintained that he had purchased them from the local Maoris in exchange for various items, but the original deed of sale was destroyed in an explosion at Kororareka in March 1845. He claimed the groups of Hen and Chickens, Poor Knights and Fanal Island and had applied in 1844 to have the Crown right of preemption waived. The Chief Protector of the Aborigines had seen no objection to the proposed purchase, but pointed out that the purchase should be made from the whole of the Whangaruru natives. This apparently was not done, as in 1849 certain natives alleging themselves to have claims to the Poor Knights and Hen and Chickens Islands, gave notice of an objection to Polack's purchases. Tawatawa of the Whangaruru Hapu, and Wakatino of the Waiariki tribe at Ngunguru, both put in a claim generally to the islands.

Polack's claims were never substantiated and in 1882 the Crown purchased the three groups of islands at public auction. The Poor Knights were set up as a Lighthouse Reserve, and in 1922 they were declared a Scenic Reserve (Land and Survey Dept. Records. Poor Knights file No. 1).

According to W.M. Fraser the Poor Knights were inhabited for many generations by a population of some 300-400. Tawhiti Rahi was occupied by the Ngatiwai Hapu, the chief being Tuaho. The Ngatitoki Hapu, with its chief Tatua, lived on Aorangi. Tatua was the paramount chief of both Islands.

In 1808 a party of natives, belonging to the Hikutu tribe from Hokianga, visited Aorangi for pigs but were refused a landing on the Island. Soon after this Tatua and a war party joined Hongi Hika on an expedition to the Hauraki Gulf. A slave, Paha, went by small canoe from Aorangi to the Mainland and informed the chief, Waikato, of the Hikutu tribe of the absence from the island of the fighting men. Waikato went immediately to the Islands together with Paha and massacred the defenseless remaining inhabitants. Many were forced to jump from the high cliffs to the sea in an effort to escape. The Hikutu people captured Tatua's wife Oneho and her daughter. The captives were later taken to Whangaroa where they were recognised by Taupo a chief there, as distant relatives. Taupo then aided them to escape to relatives at Rawhiti in the Bay of Islands.

On Tatua's return to Aorangi from Hauraki he found only about ten survivors including Wehiwehi his son who had been saved by an old man who had hidden him in a cave. Tatua then declared the Islands tapu and since that time they have been uninhabited by Maoris. (Fraser 1925)

Fraser also reports the existence of extensive stone works "including retaining walls to well-planned cultivation areas and habitation terraces, defensive walls or ramparts, and two strongly built pa, or fortifications". (Fraser 1925 : p.10) Throughout the "cultivation areas" Fraser states, there were large heaps of stone, -- the larger pieces of rock being neatly stacked on the outer sides, with the smaller

stones, down to the size of marbles, forming the inside of the heaps,—". He must have made an investigation of some of the stone heaps for he says "— here and there under large boulders walled in with stone are skeletons showing great age;—" (Fraser 1925: 14) He mentions the presence of pigs in 1915 and suggests that much of the stone work had been damaged by these animals.

The Expedition

A trip to the Poor Knights Islands was organized by Mr. Jim Donnelly of the Whangarei Museum in January 1964, to study various aspects of the Islands.

The Archaeological field recording presented several problems, one of the main ones being to locate the sites initially in the bush, and then with no adequate survey maps available, to relocate the sites. There are no tracks or easily visible landmarks and sites found one day were almost impossible to relocate later. Midden areas were scarce, consisting often of only a few bits of shell and/or obsidian. The majority of sites located consisted of some sort of stone work. No pits or ditch/scarp earth works were visible from surface indications. Several pieces of wood with some form of carving on them were found by other members of the expedition. Two burial caves, situated on the North East end of Aorangi, were visited and one day was spent on Tawhiti Rahi checking on sites there.

Types of Site

Before describing the sites seen on these islands it is necessary to elaborate, and in part re-define the terms for stone structures given in the "Handbook to field recording in New Zealand".

Terms and definitions (Fig. 3)

- (a) Free standing stone walls: - these are solidly built, standing free of any support from earthworks, and have more or less perpendicular parallel sides.
- (b) Stone retaining walls: - solidly built stone walls that act as retaining walls for terraces. These walls give the impression that they have been built at least in part as free-standing structures, and the earth of the terrace has been filled in behind them at a later date.
- (c) Stone faced terraces: - in these the stones have apparently been pushed into the face of the scarp. They are perhaps similar to the "stone revetments" described by Best (1927).
- (d) Stone heaps: - piles of stones of various sizes, the heaps presenting a rather haphazard appearance.
- (e) Stone rows: - these could be described as elongated heaps of stones. The arrangement of stones is again haphazard and the rows have not the solid build-up of the walls.
- (f) Bordered stone heaps: - as seen on the Poor Knights Islands, these are heaps of stone, bordered on some or all sides by a series of carefully placed larger stones which on occasion rise above the level of the inner flattened heaps of stones. With other examples the large exterior boulders appear to be level with the inner heap of stones.
- (g) Stone alignments: - lines of single stones (Best, 1924).

There are in addition:

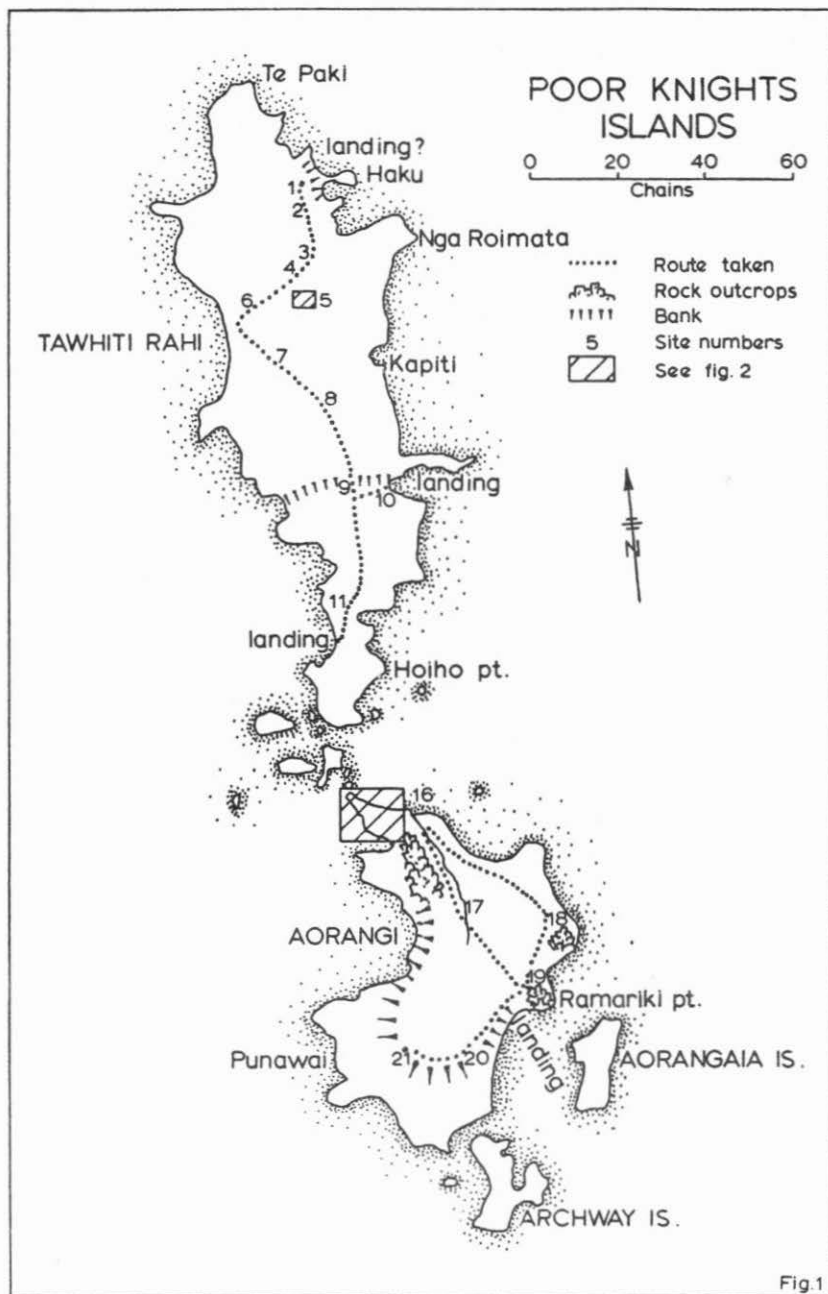
- (h) Roughly oblong or oval stones, propped up on one end, and supported by small stones, or earth.
- (i) Artificial holes made in non-portable stones.

The Sites

Tawhiti Rahi.

A day's visit was made to this island and only a few of the sites, those on the track from the landings to the lighthouse, were recorded. Considerable difficulty was experienced in locating these sites on the map and both the route of the track, and the location of the sites on the map are very approximate. (fig. 1)

- Site No. 1. is in the position now occupied by the lighthouse. It is a headland which is cut off by a scarp, formed by a strongly built retaining wall, over 100 feet long, and up to 5 feet high. The area above this wall has been cleared for the lighthouse and no other remains are visible.
2. Nearby, to the South, and on the same cliff edge, a pa with the cliff forming one side, and extensive terracing with stone revetments and stone retaining walls forming the other three sides. Obsidian and a shell of *Amphidesma Australe*, were found on one of the terraces. In probable association with this pa, and at its base, a number of stone heaps were noted.
 3. A shallow depression extending several hundred feet was noted cutting at right angles to the present track, which might be a sign of an earlier track.
 4. A number of stone heaps lies across the track nearby.
 5. A hill-top pa (fig. 2) - the most extensive site noted on the island. It is heavily bushed and its layout is unknown. The terraces have stone retaining walls, and on some of the terraces free-standing stone walls were noted. These were up to 15 feet long, and lay at right angles to the scarps. The tihi was composed partly of a natural outcrop of stone. On one side the ground slopes away more gently, with the terraces of greater width, and here a number of stone alignments were noted. These were oval areas, about 5 or 6 feet long, with one side incorporated in the slightly raised edges of the retaining walls of the terraces. On this pa, and on other terraced sites on both islands, it was noted that natural outcrops of rock were incorporated into the retaining walls of the terraces. At the western base of this pa are at least four stone rows which are crossed by the track. These rows appear to run off at an angle of about 45° from the pa terraces.
 6. A series of very wide terraces, with scarps about 3 feet high partially faced by stone. Nearby are two stone heaps. This area is now an extensive shearwater burrowing ground and was therefore not thoroughly investigated.
 7. A number of heaps of small stones.
 8. Possible stone faced terraces.
 9. A large natural rock with a possible terrace build-up butting against it.



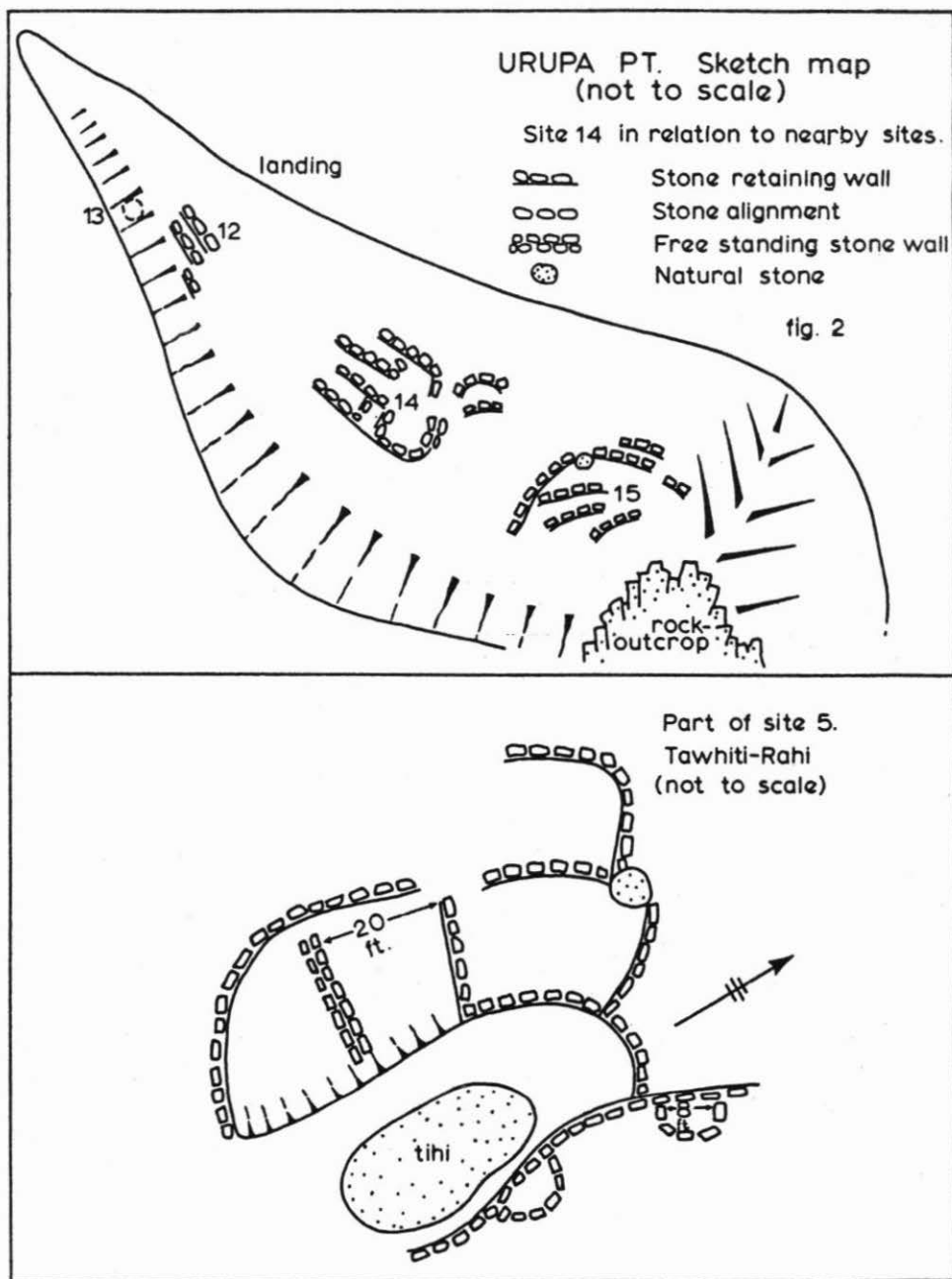
- Site No. 10. Midden - with amphidesma australe, flax snail, (placostylus sp.) and black nerita (nerita melano-tragus).
11. Midden and possible pits. This site was reported by another member of the party at a later date.

Aorangi.

12. Urupa point is a rocky outcrop with very steep cliff slopes on both East and West. (see fig. 2) On the eastern side of the point are a number of small fault lines that have been built out and reinforced by the use of boulders, and platforms thereby formed, about 6 or 8 feet wide. One of these is visible from the high tide mark, while a number of others are now hidden from casual inspection by vegetation. Some of these rock platforms, partly natural and partly artificial, appear to be between 20 and 30 feet long, and do in effect form a series of terraces on the cliff face. However, a close inspection of these was not possible.
13. On the west side of Urupa Point, and near the top of the cliff are a series of crevices, with human remains. These were first reported by Fraser. (Fraser 1925: 10).
14. Directly South of the landing at Urupa point, the land rises steeply, and this area has been extensively terraced. The very scattered midden on this site was composed mainly of amphidesma australe, with a few black nerita, and whiterock shell also. The terraces are almost invariably supported by retaining walls, and natural outcrops of rock serve as buttresses to these walls. The stone used is the local breccia, and also a nearby seam of a quartzite type of rock. These quartzite blocks are roughly rectangular in shape, and up to two feet long and were placed on the walls with their long sides adjacent to each other, and the ends only visible from the front. In one or two places smaller stones appeared to have been used in building up the terrace behind the retaining wall. A number of darkened areas were noticed on the terraces, which appeared to be the remains of the fires and on some of the terraces waterworn boulders were noted. To the West, and well in under the cliffs, some terraces have free-standing stone walls on them, running at right angles to the scarps. These terraces are further subdivided by a series of secondary scarps and retaining walls, so that the whole terrace appears to comprise of rectangular enclosures or platforms of varying heights.

Obsidian, grey & green was found in this area, as were a number of basalt flakes with smoothed edges, and a stone disc about 2 inches thick.

15. In the high rocky peak to the south of the landing, are a number of crevices, and members of the party reported seeing wooden slabs in some of them.
16. This number refers to a large area between the bed of the stream and the main rocky ridge. It is a fairly gently sloping area, with wide terraces, and little undergrowth. The terraces have retaining walls in some instances, but more notable here are the number of bordered stone heaps. This was the only place on the Poor Knights where these



were noted. Heaps of stone, partially enclosed by larger stones, appeared to be more numerous than entirely enclosed heaps. The diameter was usually between 6 and 12 feet. In the middle of one of these platforms was an upright stone, supported by a base of smaller stones. In this area stone heaps and stone rows were also noted. This is the area where most of the recent damage appears to have been done by people overturning stones, presumably in search of insects and tuataras.

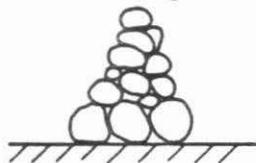
17. To the East of the stream, and still in the valley, the terracing appears to be much less extensive. However, one terrace was noted, with a square insert 10' deep by 15' wide.
18. A rocky peak, which has terracing around it. The terracing was faced with or retained by stone. In some places, stone platforms had been built up between large natural boulders, forming platforms similar to those at Urupa point. These small terraces are very solidly built, and the stone scarps reach a height of up to 6 feet.
19. A higher peak than site 7, it has terracing on the ridges to north and south. Again small, discontinuous, built-up stone terraces occur between natural outcrops, particularly on the more northern ridge.
20. A considerable area along the ridge between sites 8 and 10, where individual sites could not be pinpointed. Stone retaining walls were noted, particularly on three high points on the ridge, and these peaks may have been pa. The two square holes, approximately 10 x 10 inches, cut into stone outcrops, were noted in this area. Also discovered was a stone row, running along the ridge for about 40 feet, with an upright stone about 2 feet high at the northern end, near the holes in the stone.
21. The trig point, and highest point on the Poor Knights, is a rounded knoll, and appears to have very little terracing except on the north-west side where it joins with the western ridge.

Discussion and conclusions.

The stone structures seen on the Poor Knights islands fell into clear-cut categories, and it was necessary to redefine some terms in order to describe the structures adequately. However, these definitions are made as demanded by the needs of description for this area only. As with other surface indications on sites, these stone structures must to some extent reflect a late, if not the last period of occupation of the islands, and may therefore fall into the classic Maori or the Early European Maori Phase of occupation (Green 1963).

A report made by M. Wilson (1955) describes very similar structures on Taranga Island, in the Hen and Chickens group which are the nearest main group of islands to the Poor Knights. As well as the stone heaps and stone faced terraces similar to those on the Poor Knights Is. he reports (a lack of definitely fortified sites) and a number of pits which suggest some differences at least between the surface features on the two groups of islands. Large stone "platforms" and stone rows arranged as "spokes of a wheel" are reported on Taranga Island. Stone structures are reported from other off-shore islands; on the Three Kings (pers. comm. Sir Gilbert Archey), Little Barrier Island, Great Barrier Island, Great Mercury Island (Spring-Rice 1962) (unpublished photographs, Anthropology Department, Auckland University) Onena Island, Mercury Bay (Pers. Comm. unknown fisherman), and possibly on Motuihe Island.

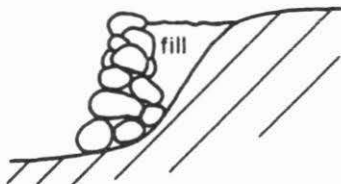
A. Free standing stone wall.



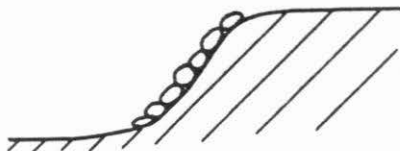
POOR KNIGHTS
fig.3

Diagrammatic representation
of categories of stone
structures.

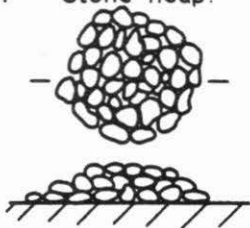
B. Stone retaining wall.



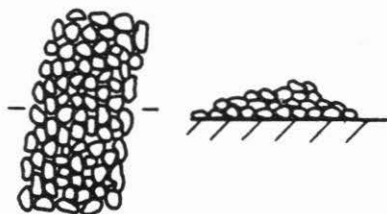
C. Stone faced terrace.



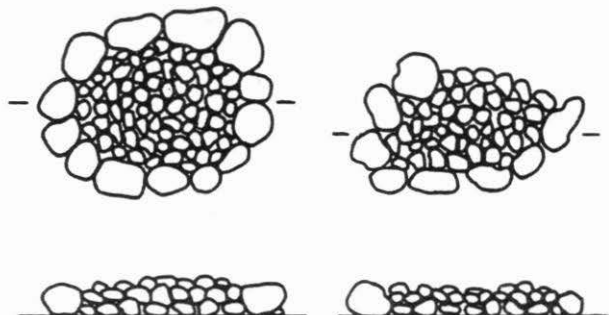
D. Stone heap.



E. Stone row.



F. Stone platform.



On the mainland of the Auckland province, stone retaining walls and stone faced terraces are reported at Whangarei extensive stone rows and terraces on the Auckland isthmus, (A. Taylor, 1961, 1962, 1963, J. Golson 1960), and stone structures at Whitianga (James Cook, Ed. Beaglehole, 1955) and East Cape (pers. observation, A. Leahy). For the rest of New Zealand, stone structures are reported from Wellington (J.S.R. Daniels, 1960, J.B. Palmer, 1963), Taranaki, (Best, 1927) Kapiti (pers. comm. J. Davidson) Wairarapa (pers. observation A. Leahy) and Nelson (Wilkes etc.al. 1963).

These stone structures take on a variety of forms, but it is noticeable that most of the reports come from the eastern mainland coast and eastern offshore islands of the Northland and Coromandel peninsulas. Whether this is indicative of the actual incidence of stone structures is however pure conjecture. Certainly on the mainland, particularly in more closely populated and well farmed areas, stone structures are particularly vulnerable, and it may well be that the off-shore islands are the only places where the true extent of stone structures and the use of stone for building purposes by the Maori, can now be demonstrated. Even on these islands however, the stone structures are proving vulnerable to the investigations of visitors searching for animal life under the stones. It would seem advisable therefore, for visitors to these islands to be made aware of the damage that is being done and if possible, more stringent protective measures should be made.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to record our thanks to Mr. Donnelly and the Whangarei Museum Group for enabling us to go on this trip and for all the assistance they gave us while there. Also to Mr. J.D. O'Brien, assistant Commissioner of Crown Lands and the staff of the Lands and Survey Department for their help and for giving us access to their files on the Poor Knights Islands.

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ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE WAIKATO AREA

by
Hans G. Pos.

During the winter of 1963 a field day was held regularly every month to record sites. It was decided to work in the Te Akau district, as a number of farmers with one or more sites on their farms were known to club members, it was also found after the first field day that members enjoyed the walks and scenery of the coastal farms. The farmers showed great interest and hospitality and went to much trouble pointing out sites on their own and neighbouring farms and driving parties in their landrovers to the more inaccessible places. During these visits there was ample opportunity to keep a look out for a site which offered good scope for further investigation during the summer months. Such a site was found on Kotare Hill. A start was made in the weekend of 20.10.1963, on a trip organised by the Adult Education Department in cooperation with the Waikato Archaeological Group. This weekend was highly successful. Lectures on site and artefact recording and map drawing were given by Roger Green and Miss Janet Davidson on the Saturday. The Sunday was spent on Kotare Hill with plane-table and measuring tape. After a discussion with Mr. Green it was decided to make this Pa the future excavation site for the Waikato Group.