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THE TE MAIKA SITE SURVEY

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Abstract

Te Maika, the south head of the Kawhia Harbour, was surveyed for archaeological sites. The area survey methods are briefly described. Some general observations on archaeological aspects of the survey area are made and the state of preservation of the sites recorded is commented upon.

INTRODUCTION

The following observations were made during a 12-day visit to the Te Maika Peninsula by John Coster and Gabrielle Johnston in July 1974.

The purpose of the visit was to locate areas of prehistoric settlement and land usage on the peninsula, and to assess the potential for further archaeological investigation. The visit was a preliminary study aimed at recording sites rather than at carrying out a detailed survey. This article is a summary of a report (Coster and Johnston, 1974) prepared for the Kawhia Protection Society, copies of which have been deposited with the N.Z.A.A.'s Waikato and Central filekeepers.

Te Maika is situated 55 km south-west of Hamilton on a promontory three kilometres long and up to 0.9 km wide which forms the south head of the Kawhia harbour. To the south-west is Albatross Point, and 3-5 km to the south is Taharoa, surveyed by the New Zealand Historic Places Trust archaeologist, Mr J. R. McKinlay, in 1970.

The Te Maika Peninsula consists of Middle Jurassic terrestrial and marine siltstone, sandstone and conglomerate, classified collectively as the Rengarenga Group (Fleming and Kear, 1960). The subsoil is a heavy yellow clay ranging in colour from yellow to bright red and overlain in several areas at the northern end of the peninsula by consolidated sand, while a belt of unconsolidated sand no more than 100 metres wide extends across the middle of the peninsula.

Two swamps are situated in the settled area on the northern part of the peninsula, while on the southern edge of the sand belt are found a small pond in the centre of the peninsula and a small swamp on the western side.

To the south of the sand belt is an area of steep ridgetops running back towards the rugged hills of Albatross Point.

The peninsula is partially grassed, but there are extensive areas of low manuka scrub and bracken, with some regenerating bush and heavy manuka scrub. Puriri and Karaka trees grow on the eastern side of the peninsula, raupo is found in all swamps and flax grows extensively on several exposed western slopes.

Springs and streams were plentiful at the time of the survey, but summer rainfall is reported to be low, which may reduce the supply of fresh water.

Abundant cockle and mudsnail beds are found in the harbour, but pipi beds are reported to be scarce. Tuatua and mussel are found in relatively small quantities on the open coast.

SURVEY METHODS

The Te Maika Peninsula comprises a relatively small area (approximately 1.5 square km), most of which can be covered easily on foot.

The appearance of Te Maika has changed little, apart from the building of holiday baches, since the two early aerial photographs 844/2 and 845/7 were taken (1944), and these, together with the smaller scale recent aerial photograph SN3730 5/4 (May 1974) give a good idea of the terrain surveyed.

Most of the survey area was explored in detail on foot at least twice, and it is unlikely that any but a few sites remain unrecorded. No particular methodological approach was adopted for the survey. We simply walked over the area and noted the general characteristics of each site. Each numbered "site" recorded does not necessarily represent an economic or geographical unit, but is merely a convenient entity for description.

Once located, sites were marked on aerial photographs or on sketch-maps traced from the photographs. The map of the area NZMS1 N73 is on too small a scale to be of any more than very limited use in relocating sites.

Fifty-six sites were recorded (N73/18-73) and details of these, together with a large-scale map (1:6910) of the area, have been filed with the New Zealand Archaeological Association. The site numbers used are those assigned by the Association, from whom further information on the sites may be obtained.

SITE CHARACTERISTICS

The field evidence for the prehistoric occupation of Te Maika falls into the five categories of "Artefact", "Terrace", "Pit", "Ditch/Bank" and "Midden", and all the sites recorded consist of a combination of one or more of these categories.

In the course of the survey only three artefacts were found - a possible polishing stone and two 2B stone adzes, which have been deposited with the Waikato Art Museum, Hamilton. Local residents have a few 2B adzes in their possession, but no other artefact types are known by the authors to have been found in the area. The sites recorded were noteworthy for the complete absence of surface evidence of stoneworking. No stone flakes or any other material which might indicate the manufacture of stone tools were observed.

Terracing was a feature of most sites and midden was often found on the scarp beneath a terrace. "Pits" included well-defined open *rua*, most of which occurred on the two *pa* sites in the area, as well as open rectangular pits, three of which had raised rims. Numbers of surface depressions, assumed to be the remains of pits, were also noted.

Eleven sites included features which may be loosely described as "ditch/banks". These include defensive ditches running across a ridgetop; drains running across a natural shelf into a swamp or the sea; small drains associated with pits; long agricultural drains covering a large area and running parallel down a hillside; extensive ditch/bank systems forming a grid pattern which are assumed to be field or garden boundaries.

Shell midden, in some cases up to one metre thick, was found on 46 sites (82%). All of the middens examined contained cockle *(Chione stutchburyi)* and pipi *(Amphidesma australe)*. The open sea-coast species tuatua *(A. subtriangulatum)* and mussel *(Perna canaliculus)* occurred in only 22 of the middens examined (48%) and where present these were invariably in smaller proportions than pipi or cockle. A total of 17 species of mollusca was collected from middens, the most commonly occurring being cockle, pipi, whelk *(Cominella adspersa)*, catseye *(Lunella smaragda)*, white rock shell

(Thais obita) and mussel. Midden deposits tended to be fairly uniform, showing little or no stratigraphy, and in addition to whole shells included quantities of crushed shell, woodash, charcoal and fragments of *haangi* stones. Fish bone (probably snapper) was noted in only four middens.

Each of the sites described fell into one of 11 of the possible combinations of the four characteristics "Terrace", "Pit", "Ditch/bank" and "Midden". Of these 11 combinations, only three occurred in any significant numbers:

"Midden"	13 sites	(23%)
"Midden/Terrace"	15 sites	(27%)
"Midden/Pit/Terrace"	10 sites	(18%)

Two *pa* are included in the sites recorded. A hilltop *pa* (N73/23) on harbour shore; 8 terraces; 1 large open rectangular pit with drain, 20 large collapsed rua, surface depressions, small amount of shell midden; close to water and raupo. N73/73, Te Totara Pa (not part of the peninsula) is a headland *pa*, 300 m long. Large area of defensive terraces (6), 3 defensive ditches; 9 terraces, 2 platforms, 3 rectangular pits, 8 (at least) rua, 4 ditches on the ridge top; extensive areas of thick shell midden covering the slopes of the headland from ridge crest to beach.

Prehistoric sites on the Te Maika peninsula do not appear to occur in any particular geographical locality and their situations range from natural terraces on the harbour foreshore to inland ridgetops, none of which however are more than 0.6 km from either the open sea or the harbour. Most sites are in close proximity to natural resources such as fresh water, shellfish beds, raupo and flax, while karaka and puriri trees are found close to a number of sites.

CONCLUSION

Most of the sites recorded are in a good state of preservation and, apart from some stock erosion, natural slipping and the spread of scrub, will remain so unless damaged by human interference.

Some of the sites however have already been partially destroyed through the building of holiday baches, the indiscriminate bulldozing of access tracks, wind or sea erosion and some suspected fossicking.

Sites on the northern part of the peninsula will be the most threatened in the future, for this is the area (in close proximity to the existing baches) where further building would be the most likely to take place. There is also the possibility that the peninsula may be "developed" as a holiday resort.

Te Totara Pa, a traditional stronghold of Te Rauparaha, is extremely well preserved. It is of such hostorical significance that efforts should be made to preserve and maintain it.

Since Te Maika lies between Taharoa and Aotea, where archaological research has been carried out by J. R. McKinlay and R. J. S. Cassels respectively, further work in the area would be worthwhile, especially in view of the possible destruction of some sites on part of the peninsula.

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