

# Archaeological mapping of pa in four Taranaki Historic Reserves

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## ABSTRACT

The earthworks of pa in four Taranaki historic reserves were mapped at a large scale using tape and compass methods. A plan of each pa was produced.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Department of Conservation places a high priority on improving the quality of management of historic reserves. Two projects relevant to this objective have been initiated by the Science and Research Division. One project provides case studies (Jones and Simpson 1995a, 1995b) and guidelines for vegetation management and site stabilisation. A second project is concerned with monitoring changes in the condition of earthwork structures and with the subject of conservation management of historic reserves generally. This second project has a specific focus on Taranaki historic reserves. Consultation with iwi is an important component of the project. Effort is currently being directed towards completing plans of archaeological features to assist future conservation planning and management. A contract to map sites was initiated and this report provides brief descriptive material to accompany the plans of pa in four historic reserves produced as a result. The plans were prepared for publication by Chris Edkins of the Department of Conservation.

## 2. METHOD

Four pa — Okoki, Urenui, Tapuinikau, and Puketarata — were mapped using a tape and compass (Fig. 1). Plans were drawn to a scale of 1:500 for the first three and 1:250 for the smaller Puketarata. The pa were mapped in eighteen days: seven days for Okoki Pa, four and half days for Urenui Pa, five and a half days for Tapuinikau Pa, and one day for Puketarata Pa. Only features within the reserve boundaries were mapped.

FIGURE 1. MAP SHOWING TARANAKI REGION OF NORTH ISLAND AND THE LOCATIONS OF PA DESCRIBED IN THIS REPORT.

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1 **Okoki Pa** Q19/24 (Figure 2, end of report)

The pa is generally aligned north-south and is located on a crescent shaped ridge which is bounded by the Urenui River on its east and south sides. To the west the ridge is bounded by coastal flatlands which extend down to the sea.

Okoki is approximately 400 m long and approximately 150 m at its widest point. The Pa is dominated by a large triangular shaped central platform, the sides of which measure 150 x 90 x 150 m. It contains 103 features (mostly rua kopihī or bell-shaped storage pits) including inclined cut paths, inferred to be former accessways, connecting the central platform to large terraces on the western and southern sides. Below the western terrace are five smaller terraces and two earthwork bastions with associated defensive ditches, which are located outside the fence in farmland. The southern terrace has three banks, one in the middle and one at each end. On the east side of the central platform there are three small terraces and three inclined cut paths. Two of the three inclined cut paths on the eastern side are located above a punawai (spring) which lies about 20 - 30 m down slope below the central platform. The inclined cut paths are deliberately constructed features and have not been produced by the activity of sheep, goats, or cattle. The wall of the inclined cut path between the central platform and the southern terrace is approximately 5 m deep at one point with some of the fill used to construct a ramp to the lower terrace.

At the south-east corner of the central platform is a lower terrace beyond which lies a 10 m high scarp and a ditch. The ditch is bounded on the south side by a mound which dominates a large terrace. A spur leads off to the south-east. A further ditch beyond is cut halfway across the spur where it meets the terrace suggesting that that this was one of the entrances to the pa.

Located to the north of the central platform are further platforms, terraces, and ditches. The western terrace curves around the northern end of the central platform and overlooks a large ditch from a height of 12.7 m. A memorial to Sir Peter Buck is located in this ditch. To the north of this ditch is a small platform where there are two fenced graves. Features in the ground suggest that other burials may be located here. Further to the north is another small ditch which leads into a V-shaped embrasure. Again, to the north of this is another ditch. Beyond this is a flight of three long, narrow terraces along the spine of the ridge. These three terraces are located outside the reserve fence.

Best's description of the pa (Best 1975) differs on a number of points from the evidence on the ground. However, Best (1975: 235) notes that 'this fort was not so well explored as it should have been, owing to heavy rains'. His plan of Okoki is reproduced as Fig. 3. Terrace R referred to by Best is not the continuous feature he describes but is a series of features, both terraces and defensive outworks. Feature T appears to be a separate terrace at least 20 m from R. Best also states that the eastern side of Okoki is without terraces, although three small terraces are clearly visible today. A terrace, not described by Best, is found below the south end of the long western terrace. The southern ditch is incorrectly drawn in the plan provided by Best (1975: 233, see Figure 3).

FIGURE 3. PLAN OF OKOKI PA DRAWN BY BEST (1975: 233). A, B-C, G, J-K = DITCHES; D, H, I, Q, R, U = TERRACES; E, M, N, O, S = TIHI OR PARTS THEREOF; L = RAISED AREA; P = ACCESSWAY; T = SCARP.

A terrace is located west of, and below, the memorial. Best describes this as terrace J (1975: 233). An access ramp for vehicles has been formed up to this terrace suggesting that the terrace has been altered since Best's visit, possibly in connection with the erection of the memorial.

Most of Okoki Pa enclosed within the reserve is covered with regenerating native forest. There is clear evidence of heavy browsing by goats. However, the degree of regrowth and the density of seedlings suggest that it has not been significantly grazed recently (although one goat was sighted on the final visit). Both areas of earthwork bastions and ditches located outside the fence on the western side have suffered some damage from stock. Two slips were also apparent, one at the eastern end of the ditch where the memorial is located and the other on the long terrace south of, and below, the main platform between the middle bank and the bank adjacent to the southern ditch. Generally the site appears to be in good condition with features remaining well defined.

### **3.2 Urenui Pa** Q19/8 (Figure 4, end of report)

Urenui Pa is located on a small isolated hill which is aligned north-west to south-east and has a large main platform approximately 150 m long and 60 m at its widest point. A low defensive terrace runs the length of the southwest side. A bank is present on the outside of this terrace in four places and at the northwest end it is large enough to be considered a platform. Above this defensive terrace is a major terrace about 130 m long. A gap in a low bank towards the south end of the major terrace is a possible access point from the lower defensive terrace. The southern extremity of the major terrace was obscured under the head of a felled macrocarpa tree. This is the terrace which Best (1975: 196 and 198) suggests was used for access to the main platform and

FIGURE 5. PLAN OF URENUI PA DRAWN BY BEST (1975: 195). A, C, G = TIHI OR PARTS THEREOF; B = ACCESSWAY; D, O, P, S, T = CROSS SECTION POINTS; F, H, I, K, L = TERRACES; J = SPUR RUNNING DOWN TO RIVER FLATS; N = DITCH; Q, R = ACCESS TO TIHI.

part of the passageway is still visible. Another large terrace is located at the south-east end of the main platform. A further small terrace is present at the north-east corner of the main platform. The main platform and the three terraces mentioned are likely to have been the principal occupation areas. Midden (location not shown on Figure 4) is present on the slopes below the major terrace on the south-west side, and below the main platform and above the Urenui River on the eastern side of the pa.

The defensive terrace on the south-west side of Urenui Pa is the principal defensive feature remaining. However, two sections of ditch are present on the north side of the pa and are separated by an area of apparently unmodified hill slope. The most eastern aspect of these defences includes a massive bank with a smaller internal bank and ditch.

Best (1975: 195-196, see Figure 5) describes a terrace, bank, ditch, scarps and other features at the southern end of the pa and identifies this as the main point of entry to the pa. The area has been substantially altered and few of the features described by Best can be identified today. A raised block of papa rock is perhaps the remnants of a large raised bank reported by Best. This block is today surmounted by a tree which appears to have been instrumental in preserving it. Nonetheless, the erosion around the tree's roots suggests that deterioration continues. There is no evidence now of the terrace described by Best on the eastern side above the river.

The main platform is largely covered by bracken fern and gorse and much of the rest of the Pa is covered in regenerating native forest. The fern and gorse

restricted the accuracy of the recording of features on the main platform. The shape and dimensions of the features shown by dashed lines could not be accurately established and other features may have been missed. On the south-west side native regrowth is very dense, obscuring visibility. The felled macrocarpas there also inhibited the recording of features.

### **3.3 Tapuinikau** P20/21, 22 (Figure 6, end of report)

This site is located on three lahar mounds characteristic of the area. The south side of all three is a steep bluff formed by a bend of the Teikaparua Stream.

The major part of the site is on the most westerly of the three mounds and is covered by well established native forest. It comprises a small platform about 15 m long on the summit and a series of concentric terraces (there are no terraces on the stream side). Stone revetting is present in places on the scarps. Stones on the terrace surfaces suggest that the revetments were once more extensive and have deteriorated. A short ditch with a low outer bank is present at the western extremity of the site. The southern end of this ditch becomes a track which descends to the river flat, while the northern end terminates at a small terrace which may have been the main entrance to the pa. The entry leads to the lowest terrace which at intervals around its perimeter has a bank and which at its eastern extremities comes a ditch. In general the features of this pa lying within the reserve are well preserved and clear.

Two important aspects of this site should be noted. First, a document by C.M. Hill (n.d.) supplied by Roy Komene of Taranaki iwi contains a useful history of the site. The document notes the presence of sacred flax plants on the summit of Tapuinikau. The present flax plants are probably the same plants or their descendants.

Second, a carved stone was also known to be located at the site. This stone was used until the 1950s in association with kawakawa for rituals associated with tangi. This stone was last identified on the site about thirty years ago by the daughter of the adjacent farmer. At that time she remembered the stone to be close to the edge of a terrace in the western half of the pa. It has not been located since and may have fallen from the terrace and been covered by debris.

The two other mounds to the east are covered in rank grass and densely regenerating scrub which are replacing the dying forest trees there. This ground cover made it difficult to identify the edges of features and to locate finer features such as pits and house floors which are probably also present.

There are pits outside the reserve and wooden artefacts have been recovered from nearby drains. A mound approximately 300 m west of the pa is terraced and there are pits on another large mound to the north of the main part of the pa.

### **3.4 Puketarata** P19/149 (Figure 7, end of report)

Best's description of the site (1975: 215-217) indicates that the pa extends along the ridge to the east but no features were found there. The pa is currently covered in second-growth vegetation and planted species such as karaka and pohutukawa.



Puketarata pa has a platform 25 by 18 m surrounded by a circular ditch with an outer bank. Two short sections of ditch and bank are also present beyond this on the western and northwestern sides. Outside of the main bank on the eastern side a narrow terrace can be identified. An old concrete strainer post suggests that the terrace was formed to accommodate a fence.

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