

# Waewaetorea Island

Historic Heritage Assessment

Bay of Islands Area Office



Melina Goddard 2012



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Department of  
Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*

Waewaetorea Island Scenic Reserve Historic Heritage Assessment

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Cover image: Waewaetorea Island taken from Urupukapuka Island facing west (DoC)

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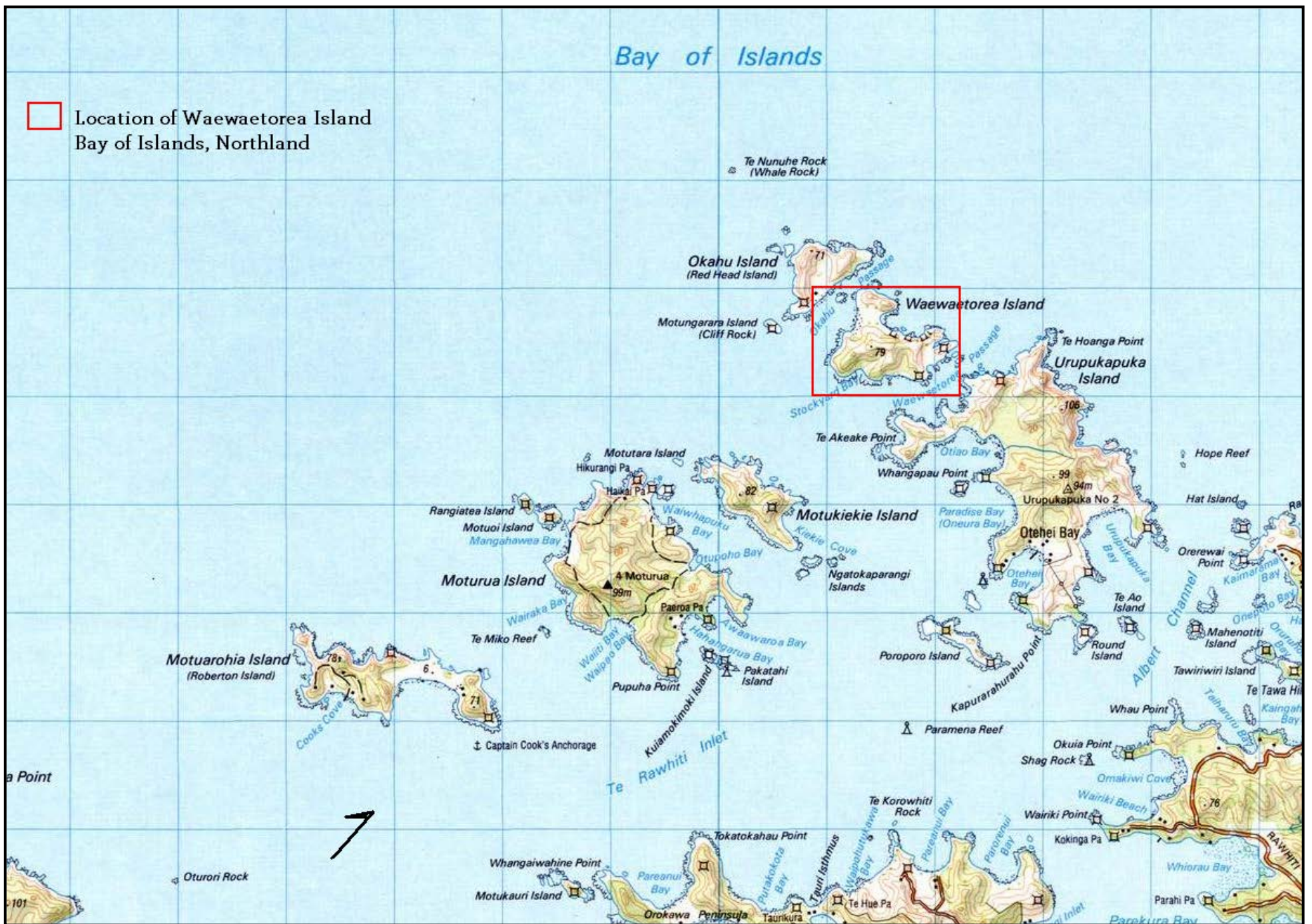


Figure 1: Map of the Bay of Islands showing the location of Waewaetorea Island



Figure 2: Waewaetorea Island with the stars showing the approximate whereabouts of recorded archaeological sites. (As generated from ARCHSITE)

## Site Overview

Waewaetorea Island is located in the Bay of Islands and is one of the six larger islands in the bay (Fig 1). It is managed by the Department of Conservation as a Scenic Reserve with eleven recorded archaeological sites (Fig 2). These sites are of pre-historic Maori origin and are characterized by headland pa, terraces, drains and a taro garden. The island is significant as a complete archaeological landscape with close associations with its neighbouring islands and is rare as an intact “remnant” of New Zealand’s early heritage.

Land status: *Scenic Reserve*.

Administered by: *The Department of Conservation, Bay of Islands Area Office under the Reserves Act 1977.*

Access by: *Private boat.*

Visitor numbers: *Unknown.*

Heritage status: *protected under the Historic Places Act 1993, the Conservation Act 1987 the Reserves Act 1977 and comes under the ICOMOS charter as a place of cultural heritage value.*

Site area: *51.5ha*

Functional location number: *DN-61-200-1063*

## History Description

Before the arrival of Europeans in the Bay of Islands, Maori stories tell of a long settlement on Waewaetorea by Ngare Raumati, Ngatiawa, Ngati Wai, and Ngapuhi. Reportedly in the 1820’s the Ngare Raumati people were driven out by a war party led by Rewa, a Ngapuhi chief from Waimate. The party attacked and defeated a pa on Waewaetorea (Ororua), so named because of the blowhole located in the coastal cliffs under it.<sup>1</sup>

Waewaetorea Island is located within the rich historical and archaeological landscape of the Bay of Islands. English explorer Lieutenant James Cook (1769) and French explorer Marion du Fresne (1772) visited and recorded detailed accounts of the Maori people of Ipipiri (Bay of Islands). These accounts are the earliest recordings in New Zealand of European and Maori interactions and provide a glimpse of pre-European Maori.



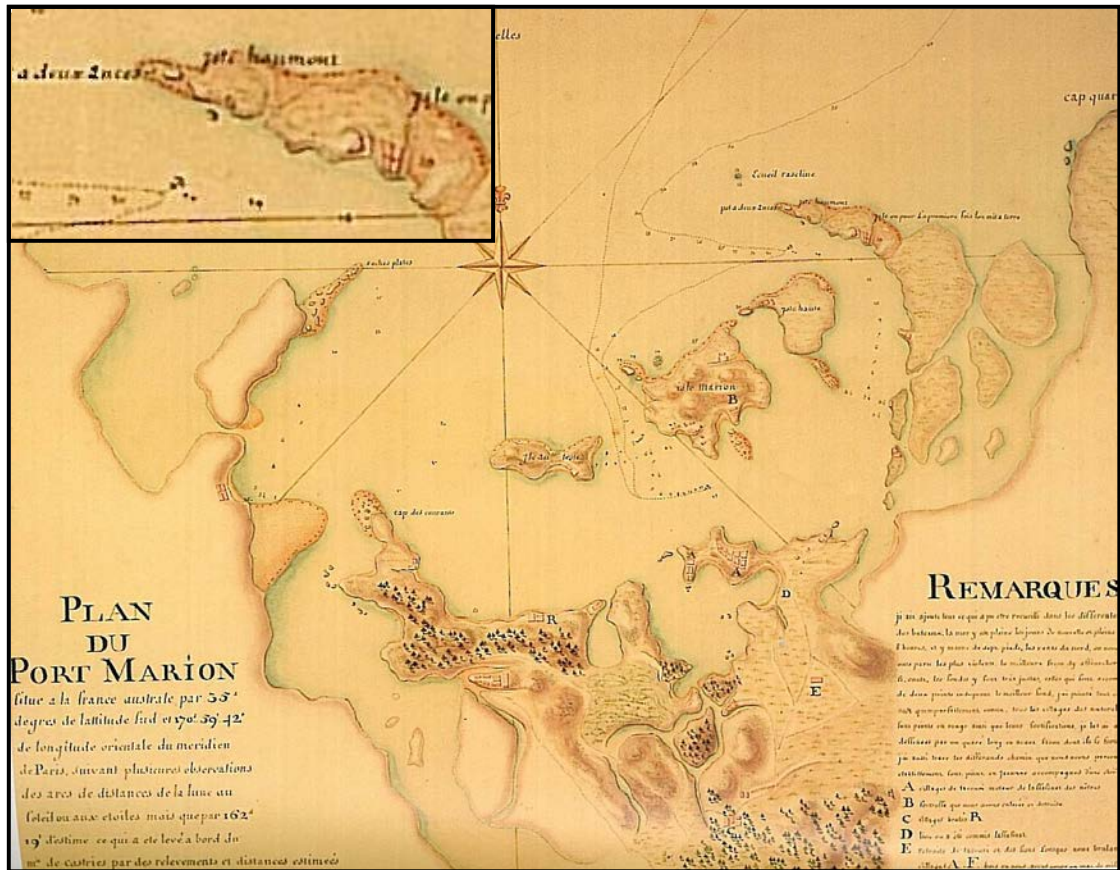


Figure 3: Plan Du port Marion with inset close up of Waewaetorea Island. Image sourced from Salmond, A. 1991.

One of these accounts is of Waewaetorea Island from Marion du Fresne’s expedition to the Bay of Islands in 1772. The Plan du Port Marion indicates that Waewaetorea was where the two ships *Castries* and *Mascarin* first anchored (fig 3):

*“At half past four we perceived that 5 of our boats, which were coming out between the islands, were signaling that there was good anchorage that people were friendly, and that water could be easily procured. As this is what we were looking for to meet our most urgent needs, we were highly satisfied, and kept on course... immediately we were anchored and we signaled to the Castries to anchor behind us.... We were at the entrance of the harbour and at the extremity of the bay.. On one side of us was a little village about a musket shot away, situated on a hill, which would difficult to ascend. This village was fortified, palisaded and surrounded by moats\*\* Ahead of the vessel, was another village, situated and fortified in much the same way”.<sup>2</sup>*

\*\*The first pa described in this account is presumably the village situated on a southeast headland of Waewaetorea on the Plan du Port Marion. It could possibly be Ororua Pa (Q05/40) or Q05/135 (terrace site), however the map is too imprecise to make any conclusions. Additionally it could be describing villages on Urupukapuka Island, adjacent to these sites.

An additional account from Marion du Fresne's goes:

*“Very early on the morning of the 5<sup>th</sup> more than a hundred canoes came around the vessel. Some had fish others had sweet potato. We traded with them for an old nail they would give anything we asked for”.*<sup>3</sup>

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the island was owned for a time by the Cross family, who were descendants of the Maori chief Te Kemara. Following the islands acquisition from Maori, the land was cleared, established in pasture and grazed with sheep. Later cattle were used to combat scrub reversion and promote pasture. Fortunately the pa sites were fenced off to prevent cattle damage which would have been severe.<sup>4</sup>

It was purchased by Mr W.N Reynolds, an American in 1967. Mr Reynolds was reported as wanting to make the island beautiful, a home for birds and a pleasure to passing yachts. This initiated plantings of exotics on the island by Reynolds and also a Mr Devonshire.<sup>5</sup>

The island had a brief period as a camper's spot while in private ownership. Camping was located in Otawake Bay and on the sandy bay on the northwestern side of the island. In 1979 a fire on the island destroyed hundreds of trees that had been planted by Mr Devonshire and the Russell Lions Club. In 1980 the island became a public reserve with the Bay of Islands Maritime and Historic Park Board. In the 1990's the island was retired from gazing and both natural and assisted re-vegetation has occurred. Today the island is still for the most part is in kikuyu although the pockets of scrub have expanded.<sup>6</sup>

## **Fabric Description**

The archaeological fabric of Waewaetorea Island consists of Pre-historic Maori earthworks. These are pa sites, terraces, pits, drains and taro plants.

A survey of the island in 1976 by Leahy and Walsh, Rountree in 1980, and also by the Department of Conservation has recorded 11 archaeological sites. The table below represents the NZAA site numbers and site types on Waewaetorea.



NZAA site #	Site type
Q05/40	Headland pa
Q05/129	Terraced knoll
Q05/130	Headland pa
Q05/131	Taro garden
Q05/132	Garden/Drains
Q05/133	Terraced headland
Q05/134	Terraces
Q05/135	Terraces
Q05/776	Terrace
Q05/777	Terrace
Q05/778	Terraces

Building on these surveys, McKay (1981) inferred the island was permanently occupied in the past and that those living there were linked with neighbouring Okahu and Urupukapuka Islands. He specifically noted the similarity of pa design between Waewaetorea and Urupukapuka and also the positioning of defensive complexes at locations that would have dominated the channels between the islands.<sup>7</sup>

In 2008 a survey of the island was conducted by Mark McCoy with the goal of relocating recorded sites, recording any new features that may be encountered and identify locations for future geophysical survey.<sup>8</sup>

McCoy's survey located eight of these sites. Sites not relocated due to thick vegetation were, Q05/129, 132, 778 and the canoe shelter.<sup>9</sup> Additional terraces were recorded within site Q05/777, and three sets of terraces and five pits were discovered on the islands ridgeline.<sup>10</sup> Q05/135 was reclassified as a natural terrace.<sup>11</sup>

The fabric of archaeological sites on Waewaetorea has been described in three functional categories: defensive, habitation, and agricultural.<sup>12</sup>

## Defensive

Ororua Pa (Q05/40, figs 4 , 5& 6) is the largest recorded site on the island. The site is in good condition and has an interesting natural tunnel that leads from the base of the headland sloping to the sea.<sup>13</sup> This extensive pa has large wide flat terraces, and a ditch and major scarp that defend the western approach, while terraces to the southeast may have been palisaded to provide defence from that direction.

There are no visible pits used for food storage, however these may have been on raised storage rooms (pataka), which is common in the Bay of Islands.<sup>14</sup> The size and complexity of this pa suggests that it was habited as opposed to being used as a retreat.



Figure 4: Ororua pa Q05/40 facing north (A Blanshard DoC).

The second pa is Otawake (Q05/130, fig 7), and has previously been interpreted as a musket fighting pa based upon its ditch arrangements.<sup>15</sup> The headland is cut by a ditch that runs along the western flank of the terraces. The features of the pa are obscured under well established ti tree and pohutakawa on the tip of an eastern headland.



Figure 5: Q05/40 as seen from Urupukapuka Island (A Blanshard DoC).

Terraced knoll (Q05/129) is suggested to be of a defensive nature, possibly due to the scarp that is 1m high. Leahy and Walsh suggested that it had a palisade set up of the encircling scarp and terrace. If so it was the only defended site facing the Okahu passage.<sup>16</sup> Jan McKay has also suggested that this site may have been a gunfighter pa.<sup>17</sup>

#### Habitation features

The habitation features consist of terrace sites which may have had structures and/or hearths located on them.

#### Agricultural features

These are defined by a taro garden (Q05/131) consisting of five taro plants a marker that previous taro plantings were done by Maori in this area, and also drains (Q05/132). In this bay there are also remnants of a stockyard associated with early farming and gave the bay its name. This may have been in use 1940's to 1970's.<sup>18</sup>

In 2008 McCoy and others recorded five pits along the islands main ridgeline. The use of this high central ridgeline would have kept crops dry and safe from raids. Overall spatial patterns are seen in the distribution of defensive complexes, settlements, and agricultural features. It is likely that there are more unrecorded features on the island and further survey is necessary.<sup>19</sup>

Compared to Urupukapuka Island which closely neighbours Waewaetorea, site density is low, which indicates different population levels inhabited the islands

and more intensive use of Urupukapuka over time while Waewaetorea was perhaps not as favoured or served a different purpose.

The important factor in explaining the difference in site density for the two closely associated islands is the ability of the island to offer living and gardening space near large sheltered bays. The two pa on Waewaetorea have commanding views of the Waewaetorea passage and may have worked with other pa on Urupukapuka to guard the passage. Leahy and Walsh proposed that the positioning of Q05/40 and Q05/130 may suggest that Urupukapuka and Waewaetorea functioned as a single political unit.<sup>20</sup>

Overall the sites on Waewaetorea as surveyed in 2008, are considered to be in good condition. Some were not relocated (Q05/129, 132, 778 and a possible canoe shelter defined as a flat area in the bay near Q05/40), due to vegetation growth. The islands history of grazing would have damaged some features, causing them to be ill defined, however current damage is minimised by lack of use of the island.

As an archaeological landscape Waewaetorea offers a diverse example of representative archaeological sites. Midden was noted by Leahy and Walsh in 1976 in the banks of the streams that come out in the gully on the western side of the island. This site has not been rechecked. Midden sites are rare on the coastal aspects of the islands and it is likely that these have been destroyed by coastal erosion which is prevalent on this island environment, as seen with other midden sites on Urupukapuka and Okahu Islands.

## Cultural Connections

Waewaetorea Island is culturally connected to the people of *Ngati Kuta* and *Patu Keha*.

## National Context

Waewaetorea and its surrounding islands are unique and important as an example of single archaeological island entities and as a set of islands with intact archaeological landscapes.

*“Intensified land development and subdivision are changing the rural and urban terrain so rapidly that only remnants of the landscapes relating to the 500 years of Maori settlement and the subsequent 100 years of joint Maori and colonial settlement will survive into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”*<sup>21</sup>

Nationally Waewaetorea is an example of a complete archaeological landscape or remnant, which in the sought after coastline of the north, is a rarity.



## Historic Significance

Waewaetorea Island is historically significant through its association with the early explorers Cook and Du Fresne who provide the earliest accounts of Maori in Ipipiri. The island is closely linked to the surrounding historically and prehistorically significant islands. Its prehistoric significance generated from oral traditions is not known but these probably exist.

## Fabric Significance

The features present on Waewaetorea are not rare in the archaeological context of the Bay of Islands. The pa site Q05/40 is unique on the island as its largest and most extensive, but largely the fabric of Waewaetorea is significant based upon its rarity in the north as a complete archaeological landscape and its importance in relation to the surrounding island archaeological landscapes.

## Cultural Significance

Waewaetorea has high cultural significance to Ngati Kuta and Patu Keha and to all New Zealanders as part of their country's early heritage.

## Management Recommendations

- Current management of the island allows no grazing and minimal foot traffic due to lack of public tracks and may be acting to preserve the archaeological features of the island. However it should be noted that well placed formal tracks could protect archaeological areas from erosion and foot traffic that may be occurring over sensitive and steep areas. A proper survey of this would be required before conclusions are reached.
- Further archaeological survey would be beneficial for future management considerations.

## Management Chronology

1976: Leahy and Walsh conducted a foot survey of the island recorded archaeological sites while under the ownership of Mr. Reynolds.

1980: Gazetted as a scenic reserve with Bay of Islands Maritime and Historic Park.

1981: Waewaetorea Island archaeological report by J. McKay.

1983: Urupukapuka and Waewaetorea Island's management plan.

1984: Survey and updating of sites by K. Rountree.

1990's: Grazing of the island by cattle and sheep was discontinued

2005: Island visit by DoC archaeologist Sally Burgess to make recommendations on proposed re-vegetation plantings.

2008: Report on reconnaissance archaeological survey of Waewaetorea Island by Mark McCoy (San Jose State University) and others (Auckland University).

## Management Documentation

DoC file numbers; HHA01 01 16 01, HHA01 02 16 02, HHA01 02 16 03, HHA01 02 16 04

Baseline inspection: *McCoy, M., 2008. Report on reconnaissance archaeological survey of Waewaetorea Island, bay of Islands, Northland, New Zealand. Department of Conservation.*

Heritage assessment: yes docdm 921177

## Sources

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McNab vol II, p.371 Jean Roux journal of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> May 1772.

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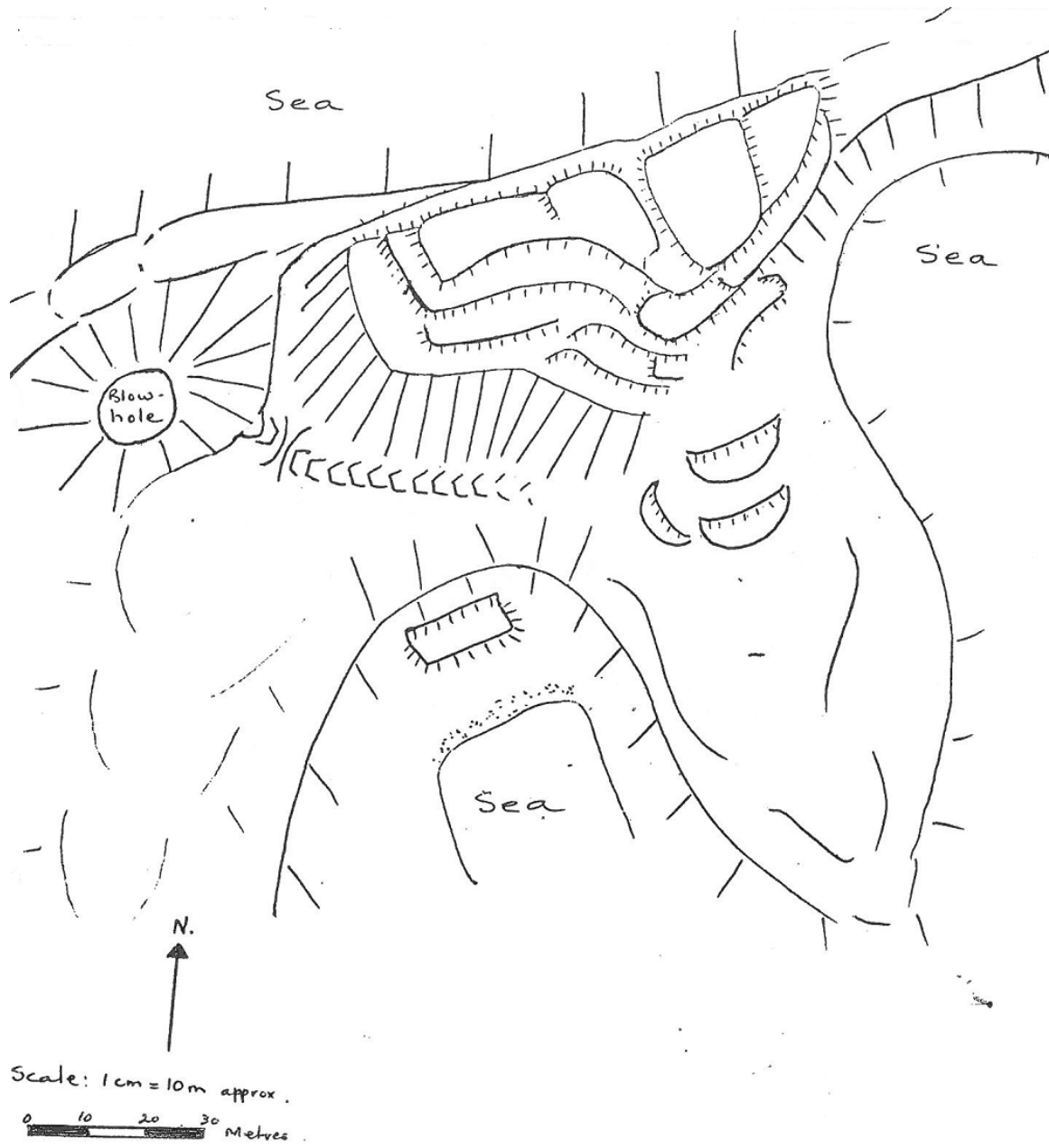


Figure 6: Sketch plan of the features of Q05/40 (Leahy and Walsh 1976 site record form ARCHSITE)



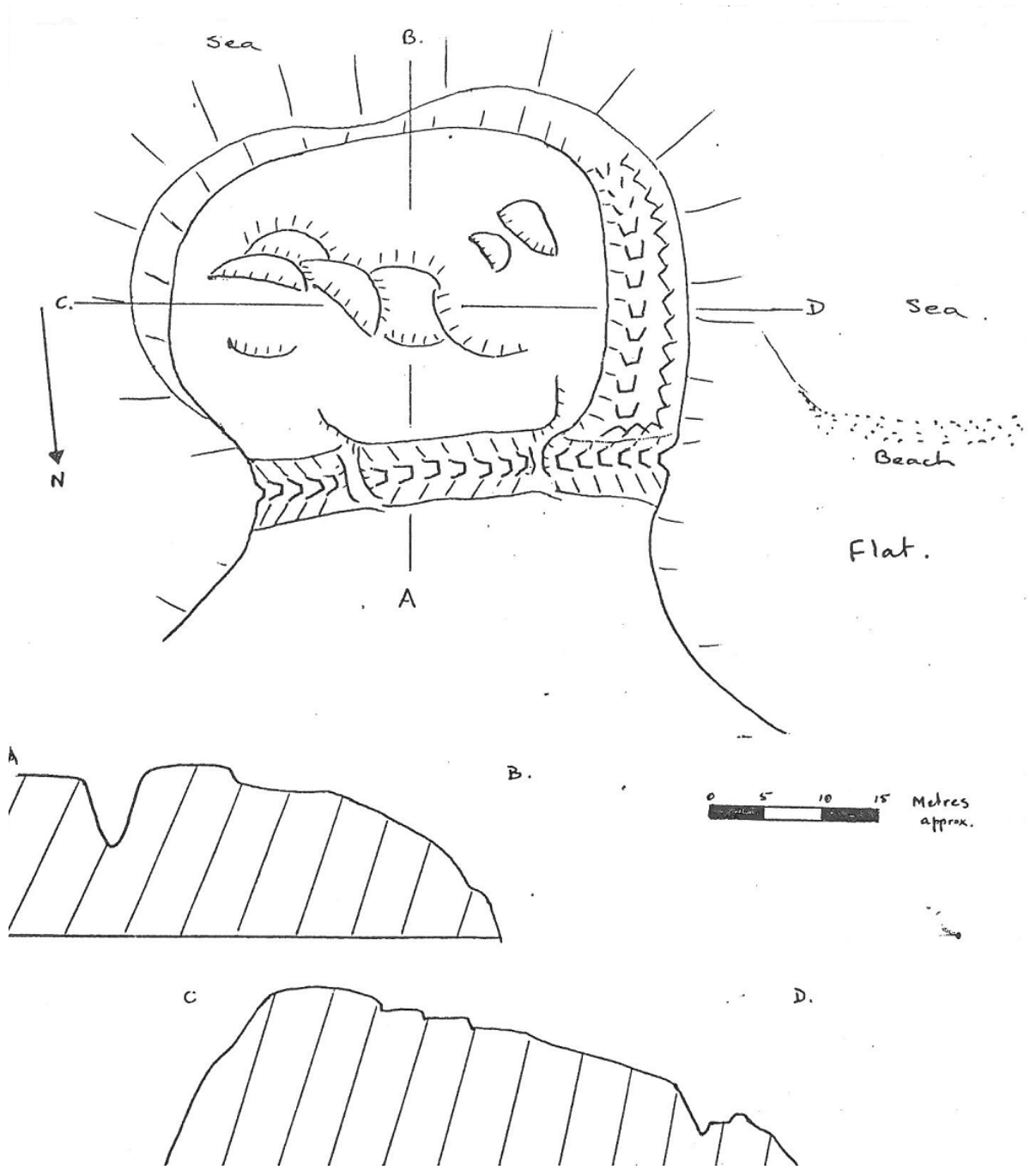


Figure 7: Sketch plan of the features of Q05/130 (Leahy and Walsh 1976 site record form ARCHSITE)

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Kelly, L.G. 1938.

<sup>2</sup> McNab 1772. Jean Roux journal of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> May. vol II, p.371

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>4</sup> DoC files HHA01-02-16-01

<sup>5</sup> DoC files HHA01-02-16-01

<sup>6</sup> DoC files HHA01-02-16-01

<sup>7</sup> McKay, J 1981:2

<sup>8</sup> McCoy, M. 2008

<sup>9</sup> Which is was recorded by Leahy and Walsh in 1976 near Q05/40 but is not recorded in ARCHSITE

<sup>10</sup> These have not been put into a site record form

<sup>11</sup> *Op cit:* McCoy.M:5-6

<sup>12</sup> after McCoy 2008

<sup>13</sup> McCoy:2008:6

<sup>14</sup> Bay of Islands Maritime and Historic Park. 1989.

<sup>15</sup> *Op cit:* McKay, J:5

<sup>16</sup> Leahy and Walsh 1976

<sup>17</sup> *Op cit:* McKay, J.

<sup>18</sup> *Op cit:* McCoy, M:10

<sup>19</sup> *ibid*

<sup>20</sup> *Op cit:* Leahy and Walsh

<sup>21</sup> Allen 2010:157