

Inspection of Motukoruenga and Motukoranga Islands, Whitianga, Coromandel Peninsula, 28 January 1995

Ian Lawlor
Environment Division
Auckland Regional Council

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1. Introduction

Motukoruenga and Motukoranga Islands were inspected on the 28 January 1995 with the staff of the Waikato Department of Conservation office and Peter Johnston, a representative of Ngati Hei (see Location Map). The objective of the inspection was to walk over as much of the Islands as possible, in the time available (approximately 3 hours), and record any archaeological structures and features present.

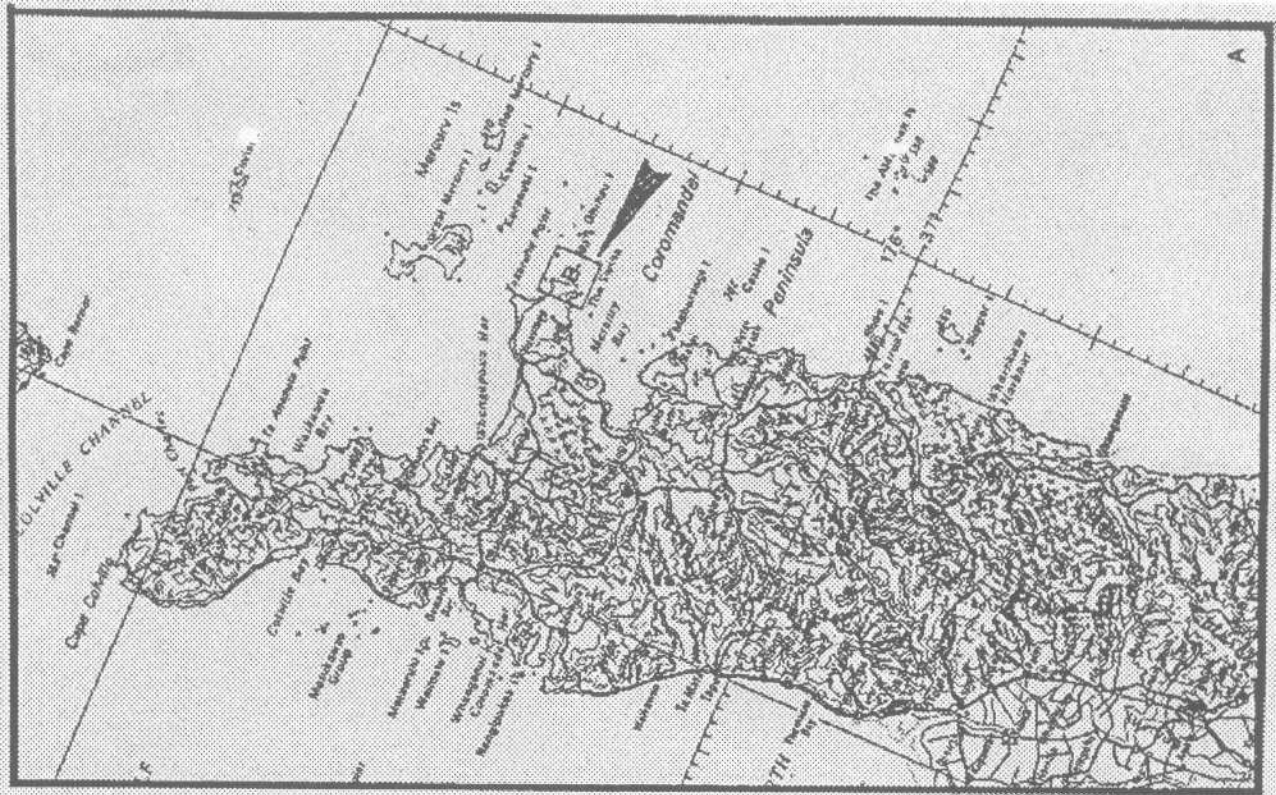
The Islands are located on the northern side of Mercury Bay, Whitianga, approximately 1 kilometre and 200 metres respectively off the mainland coast. Tahunga Mountain lies roughly 2 kilometres to the west. Ngati Hei have manawhenua over the Islands and are working with the DOC to jointly manage them. Archaeological sites have previously been recorded on Motukoranga (see New Zealand Archaeological Association sites records for T10/304, 455 and 456) but artefacts have also been recovered from Motukoruenga (pers. comm. Ngawhira Fleet).

2. Motukoruenga

Access to Motukoruenga was achieved from the small embayment on the eastern side of the Island (see Structures and Features Map, Point 1). Here the island and a large rock stack and series of reefs provide some protection from the ocean swells and currents. A steep rock-face was scaled at the northeastern end of the Island (Point 2) and the terrain was traversed from north to south. (We later found that the easiest access was by way of a low 3 metre high cliff at the southwestern end of this bay (Point 7). Here, a seasonal water channel has been cut down through the subsoil and the erosion and deposition of sediment has facilitated access.)

The island appears to be a series of 4 or 5 large land units joined together by low narrow and eroding spurs. Bird burrows are concentrated around these spurs and have undermined the ground surface. There were no birds observed in burrows during the visit. The vegetation for the most part is scrubby with some largest trees being located on the southwestern end (Point 6). There are trunk remains of dead trees on the highest and most exposed parts of the island and whole sections of the cover appear to have been flattened, possibly as a result of the fierce winds associated with cyclone Bola (pers. comm. Stella Penny).

At the northeastern tip of the Island there is a rock outcrop with a small (15 x 4 m) flat promontory which was accessed from the western side (Point 3). Although the area appeared to have been artificially flattened, the only archaeological evidence recorded here was the remains of a small hangi or fire scoop depression with 5 fire cracked stones. Black polythene bags, some filled with potting mix residue, indicate that this area has also been used re-



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