

Archaeological mapping of Awa-te-Take Pa and Ngangana Pa, Taranaki

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ABSTRACT

The earthworks of Awa-te-Take Pa and Ngangana Pa in Taranaki reserves, were mapped at a large scale in June 1998. Either tape and compass, or a combination of tape and compass and plane table and telescopic alidade were used. The resulting plans have uses in research, in site management, and in interpretation for visitors.

Keywords: Awa-te-Take Pa, Ngangana Pa, Taranaki, New Zealand, earthworks, archaeology, mapping, site management, historic reserves,

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1. Introduction

The Department of Conservation (DOC) places a high priority on improving the quality of the management of historic resources on land that it administers. Two projects relevant to this objective have been initiated by the Science and Research Unit (SRU).

The first of the two projects has involved gathering case study material (Jones & Simpson 1995a, 1995b) and will lead to guidelines for vegetation management and site stabilisation. The second project is concerned with monitoring changes in the condition of earthwork structures and with the conservation management of historic resources generally. Consultation with iwi is an important component of both projects.

The second project has a specific focus on Taranaki reserves managed by DOC and effort is currently being directed towards completing plans of archaeological features to assist conservation planning and management. To this end, a contract to map pa in two reserves (Fig. 1) was initiated by SRU and this report provides brief descriptions to accompany the plans produced (see Figs 2 and 3, inside the back cover). This contract is similar to a previous one in 1996, which resulted in the production of maps of pa in four historic reserves (Gumbley 1997).

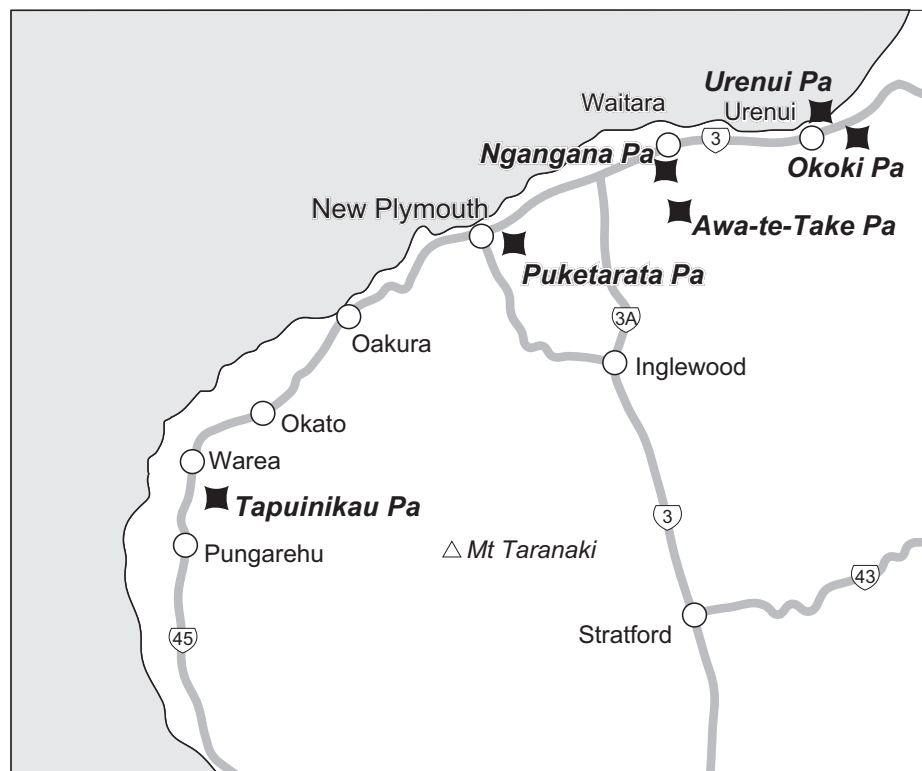


Figure 1. Map of the Taranaki area, North Island, New Zealand. The locations of Awa-te-Take and Ngangana Pa are shown, along with those of the four pa described in Gumbley (1997).

2. Method

Awa-te-Take Pa was mapped using tape and compass. At Ngangana Pa the area in pasture outside the reserve was mapped with the plane table and telescopic alidade while the area within the reserve was mapped with tape and compass. Each pa took two days to map. The fieldwork was undertaken in June 1998.

3. Results

3.1 AWA-TE-TAKE PA Q19/231

Awa-te-Take (see Fig. 2, inside back cover) is backed by steep cliffs rising from the Waitara River about 100 m below. The cliffs form the eastern defences of the pa. The pa is generally sub-rectangular in form with concentric defences that are formed by two main ditches, one set outside the other, and with a further short stretch of ditch and bank, outermost. Awa-te-Take is about 65 m wide and 110 m long and covers about 6500 m².

The inner defended area is a maximum of 55 m long by 40 m wide. Scarps divide the inner area into three sections: a triangular-shaped platform, an upper terrace and a lower terrace. The platform is at the centre back, immediately adjacent to the river cliff, and contains a house site. To the southeast of the house site and aligned along the cliff edge, is a series of five depressions, spaced approximately 1.5–2 m apart. Adjacent land-owner, Rodney Jopp (pers. comm. 26 June 1998) believes that these are graves, although given their location, post-holes must also be considered a possibility. The two terraces below contain eleven or twelve rua kopihī (subterranean storage pits), four of which are situated along the base of the scarp below the platform. As well as four identifiable rua kopihī on the lower larger terrace, patches of soft ground may indicate that further rua occur here. A defensive bank surmounts the scarp at the edge of the inner defended area on the southern side and the banks are also evident at the northern end. Egress from the inner defended area is made on the north side via a ramp leading into and across the ditch. The inner side of the ditch is 9 m high and the outer side is approximately 2 m high.

Between the two main defensive ditches lies an outer defended area which is generally 4–6 m wide but which broadens at the northern end to form an occupation area measuring some 27 m long by 15 m wide. This broad northern arm of the outer area is divided in two by a short low scarp. The higher section, next to the cliff edge, contains three rua kopihī. The lower section contains a single rua and a notable, massive totara tree. At the northwest corner, where the outer area narrows, there are two points of egress: one into the inner ditch, and one across the outer ditch. The outer ditch is spanned at this point by a raised causeway which leads to a low breach in the outer-most bank. The western and

southern arms of the outer area appear to have had mainly a defensive role and there are remnants of low banks on both the inner and outer edges in places.

Near the south-west corner of the inner ditch there is a rectangular aperture cut into the outer side face. This aperture is 1.8 m below the top of the scarp and 0.9 m from the corner, and measures 1.4 m (horizontal) by 0.3 m (vertical). Its function is not known.

About midway along the southern arm of the outer area a cutting provides egress via a causeway across the second ditch to the outer bank. Further south-east, there is a small transverse bank lying across the surface of the outer area. At the south end of the area it overlooks the possible main entrance and at this point a small bastion-like feature protrudes towards the cliff. This feature is lower than the general level of the outer bank and appears to provide close protection to the entrance of the outer of the two main ditches.

The floor of the outer ditch changes elevation following the lie of the land. The outer edge of the ditch is surmounted by a bank along most of its length except the part of the ditch at the northern end of the pa where it is simply cut into the natural slope.

On the south side of the pa, the two main ditches are accompanied by a third short and narrow ditch and all terminate before the cliff edge is reached. The fact that none of the defensive lines extend to the cliff edge represents an apparent weakness. The undefended area next to the cliff edge contains a range of features, including scarp and a rectangular pit. The organisation of these features and their relationship to the defensive ditches and banks may indicate that the main entrance to the pa was through this area.

A farm track forms a terrace adjacent to the outer bank on the north and north-west sides of the pa.

The ramps and causeways described are most likely to be part of the original fabric of the pa. The ramps are reminiscent of those found on Okoki (Gumbley 1997). The point of egress from the inner defended area is certainly authentic but the origin of other features is less certain. They may represent modifications to provide access for stock, although this is unlikely given their form and setting.

3.2 NGANGANA Q19/104

Like Awa-te-Take, Ngangana (see Fig. 3, inside back cover) is located at the top of a cliff above the Waitara River. The position provides a good view down the lower river to the town of Waitara and the river mouth. In spite of the modification of a large area of the pa in the vicinity of the present house, it is clear that Ngangana has a different form to Awa-te-Take.

Ngangana occupies the end of a large headland and consists of a number of platforms running east-west along the cliff-top, an outer occupation area flanking two of these platforms, and a further platform beyond to the north-west. There is a complex series of defences at the eastern end of the pa. The defended area of Ngangana is approximately 13,000 m² of which approximately 3000 m² has been damaged. This does not include the bulldozed tracks within the largely intact area of the pa.

The corner position on the cliff-top is occupied by the largest platform (about 60 m long by 30 m wide). Within the central platform are two graves containing four members of the Wood family. Alongside the southern grave there is a small brick alignment which the current house-owner understands to have been a child's grave (James Stewart pers. comm. 23 June 1998). Although most of the northern side of the central platform has been modified by the construction of the house and gardens, the position of a defensive ditch and bank is indicated by a remnant running east-west parallel to the cliff edge. It is likely that the ditch and bank originally continued through the area now occupied by the house but the extensive modification of the area around the house, sheds and gardens pose some problems in interpretation.

A cliff-top platform to the east is smaller (about 35 m long by 20 m long) and is enclosed on three sides by defensive ditches and banks. The platform is largely intact, except for the north-west corner which is within the area fenced out for the house and which is the site of a concrete water tank. In addition, at the eastern end, a bulldozed track has been formed from the ditch up to the platform.

The two platforms are adjoined on the northern and eastern sides by an area shaped like a reversed 'L'. As with the central platform, the 'reversed L' area has been modified by the house and gardens. The original dimensions of the area were probably about 130 m long by 30 m wide but now only an area about 60 m long by 30 m wide remains still largely intact. The northern, outer, side of the 'reversed L' area was protected by a ditch and bank but, as with the ditch and bank on the inner side between the platforms and the 'reversed L', only a remnant survives. The northern ditch terminates open-ended at the eastern end of the 'reversed L' area. The eastern perimeter is protected by a further ditch and bank, which separates off the eastern-most platform. Bulldozed access tracks have been formed through the defences in three places: into the ditch to allow access to the central platform; the major levelling of the ditch and bank to allow access to and from the farmyard; and from the east end of the area where it forms a causeway across the ditch to the eastern platform.

The eastern-most platform is the smallest (about 19 m long by 19 m wide) and contains two *rua kopihī* and a depression. A small remnant of defensive bank is evident on the north side of the platform. A bulldozed track truncates another section of remnant bank on the east side of the platform. The track leads down the scarp onto a small terrace (about 10 m long by 13 m wide) below and to the east of the platform. The bulldozed track continues down the slope to the lowest terrace of the pa, in the process truncating a small ditch and bank just below the upper terrace. The lower terrace is about 35 m long by 4-10 m wide and continues from the 'outlet' of the defensive ditch associated with the eastern-most platform and upper terrace. There is no apparent outlet of the bulldozer track from the lower terrace and so the issue of how intact this terrace is remains uncertain. Below the lower terrace is the final part of the eastern defences in the form of another small ditch and bank which again appears to have been truncated by bulldozing. Below these defences there is further evidence of bulldozing. This includes a bulldozed track which runs down the slope to the east beyond the outermost defences. This track cuts through an earlier bulldozed track which now remains as a bank raised

approximately 3 m above the more recent track. Both of these tracks are probably related to the quarry below.

It has been suggested (N.Z. Archaeological Association Site Record Form) that the track on the north side is aligned along an old ditch and bank, possibly a continuation of the ditch east of the 'reversed L' area which shares the same alignment as part of the track. It is difficult to assess the validity of this suggestion but it is worth asking what defensive advantage would be gained by continuation of the ditch down the slope. The transverse ditch is open-ended, but this feature may be mirrored by the ditch defending the northern side of the eastern-most platform.

The north-western 'wing' of the pa is separated from what is probably the western remnant of the 'reversed L' area by a ditch that becomes a terrace along the north-east side of the north-western platform. This ditch has probably been modified in the course of the formation of a bulldozed track which zig-zags down the river cliff to the south-west of the pa. The north-west side of the ditch is formed by a scarp surmounted by a bank sitting on a platform 35 m long by 17 m wide. At the northern end of the platform a bulldozer has been used to form the fenceline. This activity has damaged the edge of the platform, the southern end of a small ditch marking the north end of the platform, and the side of another small platform. To the east of the fence along the base of the scarp below the platform where it joins the terrace are three rua kopihī. A little north of this is a small raised area which is probably a remnant of a larger feature modified by earthmoving. Nearby, on the cliff side of the fence, is what may be the end of a ditch that has been filled. However the ditch continues down the face of the river cliff as an obviously bulldozed track. This makes the interpretation of the feature as a ditch tentative without further investigation. To the north there is a depression close to the top of a low scarp, which appears to mark the end of the pa.

It is difficult to assess the extent and nature of Nganana's features in the area that is now either pasture, house and garden, or farmyard. Remnants are visible and suggest that an array of features were present in this area, one of which is probably the continuation of the ditch and bank forming the north side of the 'reversed L' area. The position of the roots of a rewarewa tree standing on the top edge of a scarp indicates that here at least the present ground surface is 0.75 m below that when the tree began growing.

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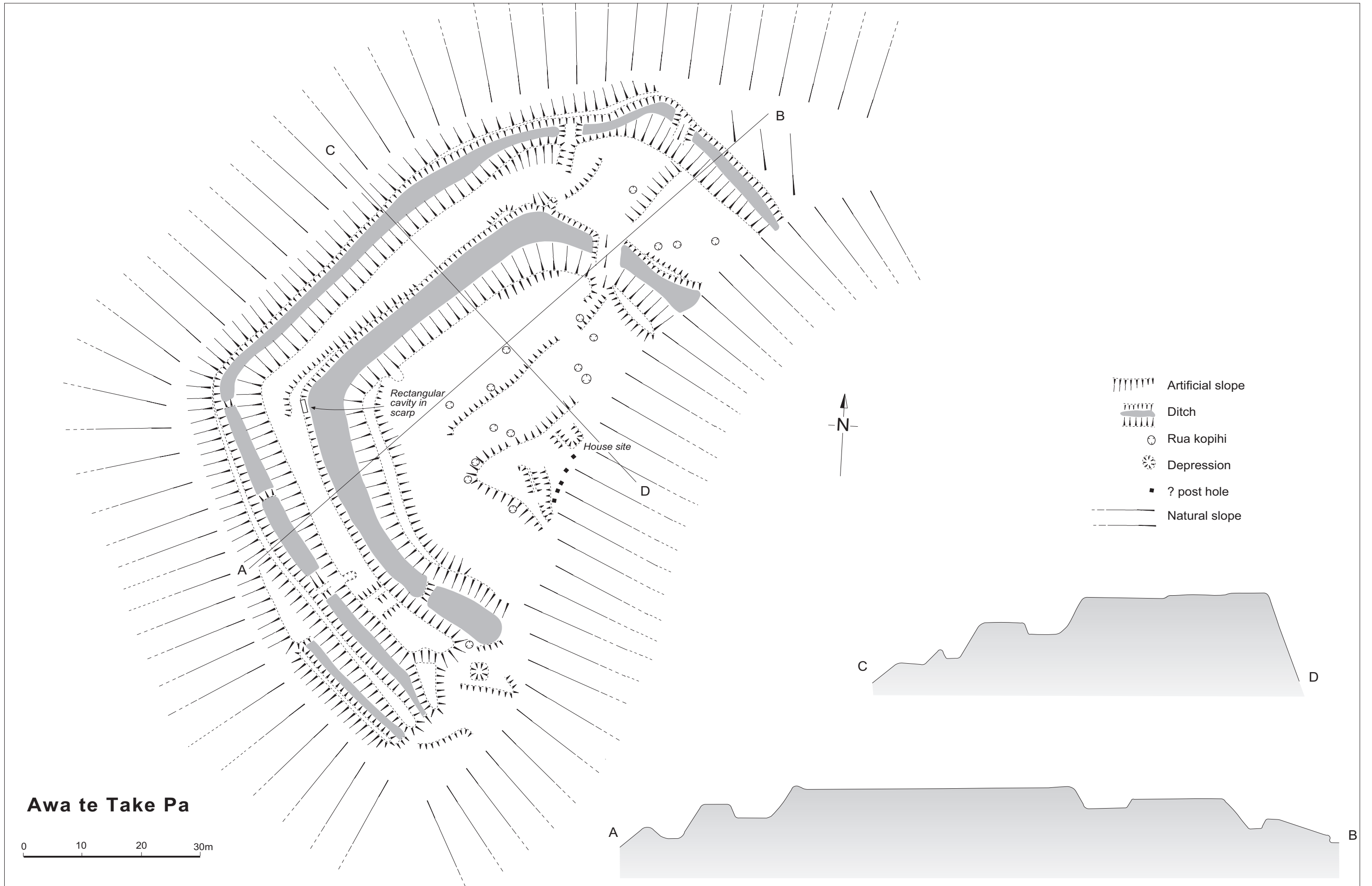


Figure 2. Awa-te-Take Pa, Taranaki.

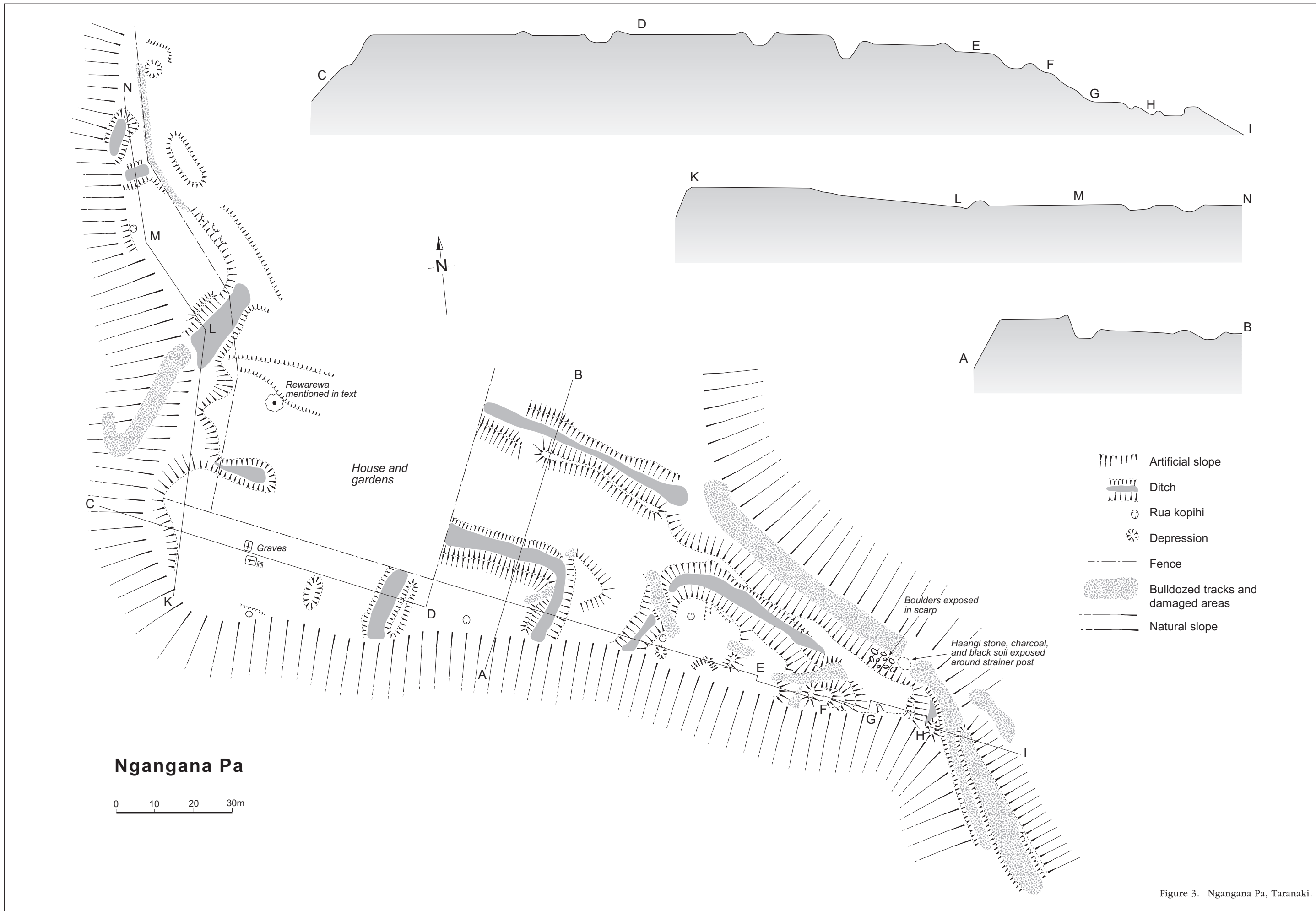


Figure 3. Ngangana Pa, Taranaki.