

## A possible pre-Tasman canoe landing site, or *tauranga waka*, in Golden Bay, South Island, New Zealand

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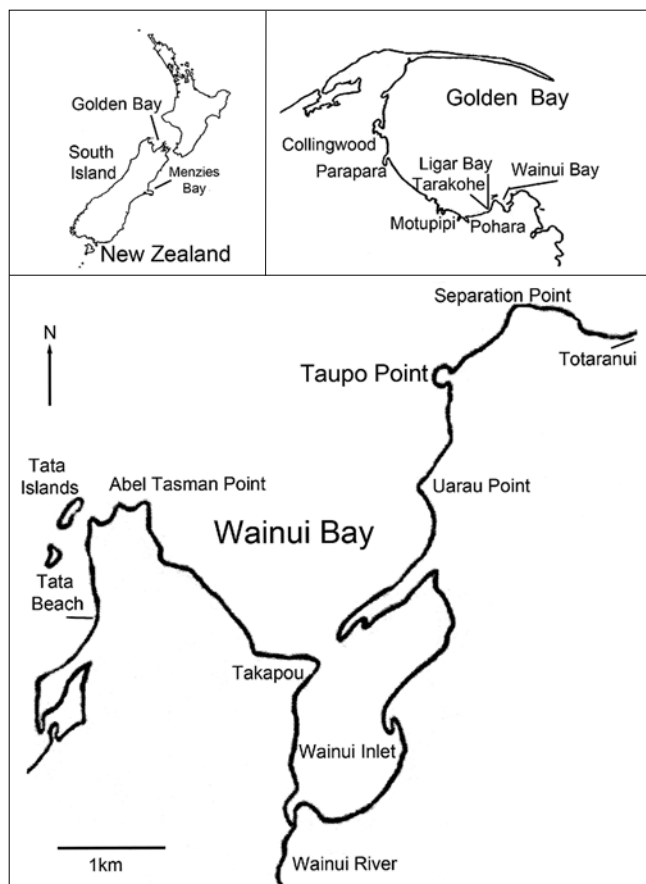


Figure 1. Map of New Zealand and map of Golden Bay and Wainui Bay showing localities mentioned.

### Introduction

An archaeological investigation in 2012 involved a non-disturbance survey of an extant and potentially pre-Tasman canoe landing site, or *tauranga waka* at Taupo Point, Wainui Bay, in the Golden Bay region, South Island, New Zealand (New Zealand Archaeological Association Site Recording Scheme N25/50) (Fig. 1). Māori canoes or *waka* were first recorded on a beach at Taupo Point in an illustration of Abel Tasman's 1642 visit to this area published by Nicolaas Witsen in 1705 (Witsen 1705: 171) (Fig. 2). The 2012 fieldwork findings are correlated with the Witsen illustration and other historical evidence.

In June 2012, the Dutch Embassy in New Zealand organized a seminar to mark the occasion of the 370th



Figure 2. *Vaertuigen Gedaente der inwoonders van Selandia Nova*. Vessel and appearance of the inhabitants of New Zealand (Witsen 1705: 171).

anniversary of Abel Tasman's discovery of New Zealand. Six months later, prompted by discussions at this seminar on the Witsen illustration, members from the New Zealand Underwater Heritage Group Inc. (UHG) investigated the *tauranga waka* on the beach south of Taupo Point.

The historical significance of Wainui Bay as a site of national importance where the first contact between Māori and Europeans took place in 1642 is not fully appreciated by the New Zealand public. Wainui Bay is also important as it features in the Witsen illustration, which is the first printed image of New Zealand.

Taupo Point is situated at the north-eastern entrance of Wainui Bay (Fig. 1). From 1974 the area around Taupo Point became part of the Abel Tasman National Park. The beach modifications at Taupo Point have only recently been officially recognised in the *Abel Tasman Foreshore Scenic Reserve Management Plan June 2012* (p. 33):

On the northern coastline, on the stony beach to the west [sic] of Taupo Point, there are intertidal areas that have been cleared of rocks. It is likely that this was done by the local Māori to provide for easier landing of *waka*.

These modifications are a series of artificial channels and areas immediately to the south of Taupo Point where rocks have been cleared to allow vessels to be hauled up onto the beach (Fig. 3). The authors suggest that the same channels may have been used to land nets. As



Figure 3. View of the south beach from Taupo Point showing channels and areas cleared of rocks to create *waka* and net landing areas (Photo: M. Blair December 2012).



Figure 4. Aerial view of Taupo Point. The rock channels are just visible in the shallow water to the right of Taupo Point, at the edge of the shadow (Photo: K. Jones 2007).

no similar rock alignments were observed in the wider Wainui Bay area, the authors concluded that these channels were artificial. They postulate that the people who created these landing sites at Taupo Point were Māori who inhabited the village or *kāinga* on the neck of the peninsula and defended enclosure or *pā* on the headland in the first half of the 17th century or possibly earlier. If correct, the *tauranga waka* at Taupo Point could be amongst the oldest known maritime structures built by Māori. The Witsen image does not show the Taupo Point site in sufficient detail to establish the 17th-century form that the beach modification took but the research presented here suggests that modifications of the beach by subsequent post-colonial land owners appear to be minor. As favourable anchorages, harbours and *tauranga waka* used by early Māori continued to be used over the centuries into modern times, photographic archives and private collections were searched for images which would indicate modern alteration to the canoe landing site. Landowners, their descendants and local Māori historians were also interviewed for their recollections of the Taupo Point beach. Photographs located during this search, dating from 1956 and 2012, show a stable beach structure that has changed very little over 56 years despite the dynamic beach environment being exposed to severe weather events from time to time.

As predicted climate change and rising sea levels will most likely result in the loss of archaeological data at Taupo Point it is important to record these sites. The northern parts of the South Island of New Zealand were drenched in record rainfall from 13 to 15 December 2011, causing floods and devastating slips, particularly in the eastern parts of Golden Bay. A number of landslides in December 2011 came down to sea level and permanently changed the landscape on some beaches in Wainui Bay. Severe flooding events have occurred in the Nelson-Tasman region in the years 1895, 1904, 1929, 1947, 1957, 1970, 1983, 1986, 2010 and again in June 2013 (National Institute

of Water and Atmospheric Research). Many of these events caused severe slips and damage on a similar scale of the 2011 floods. Taupo Point has so far escaped landslides but the authors observed that a few hundred metres to the south of Taupo Point a slip in 2011 terminated at sea level. Beach modifications to accommodate canoe travel as observed at Taupo Point may still be extant because Taupo Point is relatively remote, geologically stable, and protected from adverse weather conditions.

Taupo Point and Takapou, also depicted in the Witsen (1705) illustration, are the only known *pā* sites where Tasman's expedition recorded signs of Māori occupation in Golden Bay. These sites were subsequently defended during the incursions of the Musket Wars in the 1820s (Barnicoat 1841–1844; Crosby 1999). Despite being a striking feature the canoe landing site at Taupo Point has not been part of previous archaeological surveys. Brailsford (1981: 82) recorded the longest rock channel in a sketch but otherwise does not refer to it in the text. The width and length of the channels will point to the volume of the *waka* traffic and the maximum size of individual vessels hauled onto the beach. The *tauranga waka* at Taupo Point is one of the few sites of this type in the South Island of New Zealand. Another well preserved site is in Menzies Bay, Banks Peninsula, South Canterbury (New Zealand Archaeological Association Site Recording Scheme N36/60). This was also surveyed to provide comparative data and aid in the establishment of the principles underlying location choice for *tauranga waka*.

#### Māori settlement in Eastern Golden Bay

The estimated earliest settlement date for Eastern Golden Bay is the 15th century. There are no radiocarbon dates available for Taupo Point, Uarau Point or Takapou, the three archaeologically identified major settlements in Wainui Bay, or for any of the settlements to the immediate north east of Wainui Bay. For the area immediately to the west of Wainui Bay Barber (1999: 138–146) gives



Figure 5. Southern beach at Taupo Point at low tide (Photo: J. Robertson 1956).

16th-century radiocarbon dates for Tata Beach, and 15th-century radiocarbon dates for Pohara Beach and Ligar Bay. For the area further to the west in Golden Bay, radiocarbon dating gives a 15th-century date for Parapara (Barber 1994: 56). For Totaranui, east of Wainui Bay, Barber gives a date that brackets the middle of the 15th century to the very early 17th century (Barber 1994: 246–47) (Fig. 1). For Taupo Point, Barber (1994) suggests a post 1650 CE date for the earliest settlement. However, Brailsford (1981: 81) observed that:

The pa at Taupo Point is well placed as the possible home of at least some of the Maori involved in the Tasman tragedy. This site reveals good evidence of a long history of occupation with very extensive midden layers on the upper slopes of the point and charcoal stained soils.

The ‘Tasman tragedy’ refers to a skirmish between Māori and the Dutch on 19 December 1642 during which four Dutch seamen lost their lives (Sharp 1968: 122–23). The depiction of *waka* on the beach south of Taupo Point in the Witsen illustration supports Brailsford’s (1981) conclusion. Following the encounter with Māori the Dutch named the bay *Moordenaers Baij*. From the visit of Captain Cook until the middle of the 19th century, Golden Bay was referred to as Massacre Bay. In tracing Māori history, Mitchell and Mitchell (2004: 145) concluded that at the

time of Tasman’s visit the resident tribe or *iwi* were the Ngāti Tumatakokiri who were well-established in Golden Bay in the 17th century. In support, the Witsen illustration shows 12 *waka* in various locations of Wainui Bay. Tasman’s official account mentions that 22 *waka* were observed on the morning of 19 December 1642 in the wider Wainui Bay area. Eleven of these 22 *waka* paddled towards the Dutch ships at anchor (Sharp 1968: 123). These canoes



Figure 6. Southern beach, Taupo Point, at low tide (Photo: B. Alexander December 2012).



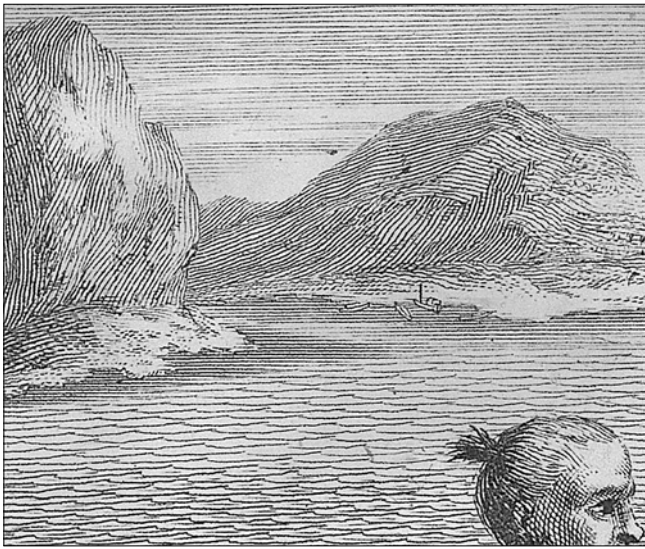


Figure 7. Detail from the Witsen (1705) illustration showing Taupo Point, and the beach immediately to the south with canoes.



Figure 8. Taupo Point and the beach to the south, from the same view point as the detail in the Witsen illustration—Figure 7 (Photo: R. Mack 5 January 2010).

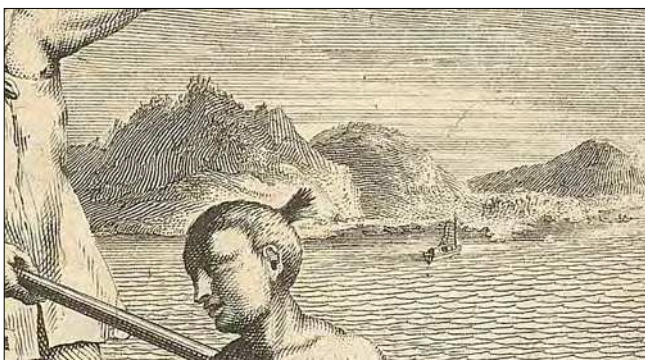


Figure 9. Detail from Witsen illustration showing Abel Tasman Point, Maori canoes and a Dutch boat.

had between 13 and 17 Māori paddlers. Based on these figures the adult male population in this part of Golden Bay consisted of at least 123 men. This suggests an overall population of several hundred people in Eastern Golden Bay. Fewer canoes were observed the previous evening of 18 December 1642, and there could have been an increase in numbers as people arrived overnight from other parts of Golden Bay.

#### Topographical features favouring Māori settlement at Taupo Point

Taupo Point is a limestone tombolo on the north-eastern side of Wainui Bay. The area was acquired by the Department of Conservation in 1974 and incorporated into the Abel Tasman National Park. The site advantages for the initial Māori settlers were the easily defendable natural position, the excellent lookout over Wainui Bay and Golden Bay from the top of the point, the availability of fresh water, suitable land to cultivate sweet potatoes or *kūmara* close by, and ready access to the marine resources of the bay.

There are sandy beaches to the north and south of Taupo Point (Fig. 4). The natural harbour on the south beach has a sandy bottom but a rocky littoral between the high and low water marks. The northern beach is free of rocks but has a steeper gradient and is exposed to the prevailing north-westerly winds in Golden Bay. The southern beach is completely sheltered from winds. This was observed by the authors when a 30-knot north-westerly wind developed one afternoon. Although the weather and waves became moderately rough in Wainui Bay, the southern bay at Taupo Point remained very calm. From a boat handling point of view, the southern bay is the preferred landing place. In addition, Wilkes (1961) observed a denser layer of occupation material on the southern side of the isthmus compared to the northern side. Due to its sheltered location, the southern beach appears stable and impervious to weather events. Photographs taken from almost the same location in 1956 and 2012 show no change as individual rocks are identifiable (Figs. 5 & 6). The channels and areas cleared of rocks appear unmodified.



Figure 10. Abel Tasman Point from the same view point as the detail in the Witsen illustration—Figure 9 (Photo: R. Mack December 2012).



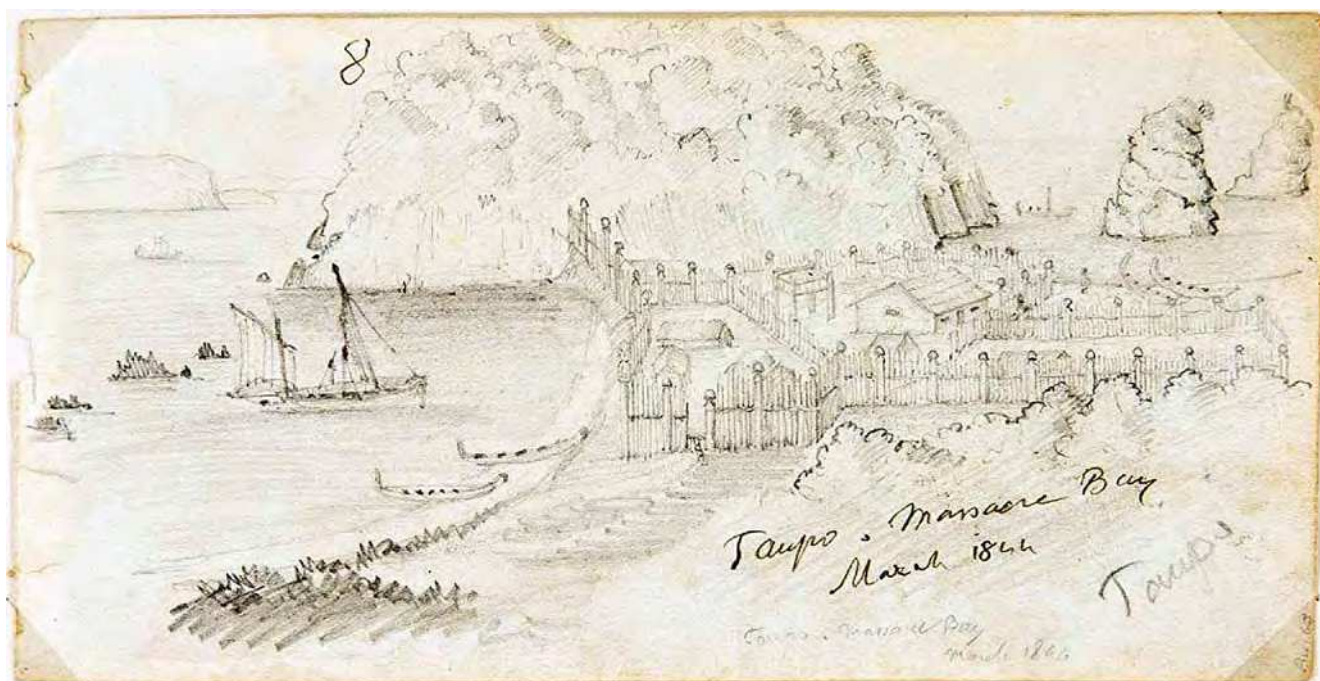


Figure 11. Barnicoat's (1814–1905) sketch of Taupo, Massacre Bay, March 1844 (Hocken Collection, University of Otago, 94/267).

### The Witsen illustration of Tasman's visit to Golden Bay in 1642

The Witsen illustration (Fig. 2) is the first printed image of New Zealand. This high quality etching documents the Wainui Bay landscape and records locations of Māori occupation in fine detail. A close examination of the illustration under magnification indicated that the 1642 Tasman expedition had observed more details of Wainui Bay and the wider Golden Bay coastline than previously realised (Barber 1992; Brailsford 1991; Mack 2004, 2006; Sharp 1968). The Witsen illustration is the first record of indigenous New Zealand watercraft on shore in designated landing areas.

Of particular interest in the Witsen illustration is the upper left corner, identified as the area around Taupo Point. An enlarged detail of the image shows canoes on the beach just to the south of the Point (Fig. 7). A 2010 photograph (Fig. 8) taken from the same point as the detail in the Witsen illustration confirms that Witsen's sources had accurately depicted Taupo Point. Māori dwellings are not shown in the Witsen illustration but the canoe detail suggests at least temporary occupation at Taupo Point. The expanded view on the right hand side of the Witsen illustration (Fig. 9) shows more canoes at Abel Tasman Point, which is the headland on the western side of Wainui Bay. A boat under sail, which appears to be from the Dutch expedition, is shown to be very close to the shore (Mack 2004). A 2012 photograph (Fig. 10) shows Abel Tasman Point from the same point of view as this section of the Witsen illustration. In the centre of the Witsen illustration is a third site with canoes on and near the beach, which Mack (2004) identified as the beach close to the Māori settlement of Takapou, near the entrance to Wainui Inlet.

### J. W. Barnicoat's 1844 drawing of Taupo Point

In March 1844 John Wallis Barnicoat sketched an extensive pā on the narrow isthmus and the beaches to the north and south of Taupo Point. Barnicoat was a surveyor employed by the New Zealand Company (Barnicoat 1841–1844). No beach modifications are shown in Barnicoat's sketch. However, when compared with photographs taken in December 2012 it is clear that Barnicoat's sketch was drawn at high tide, which would have covered the rock channels. Barnicoat's drawing suggests that at high tides canoes could either be beached or tied to the palisade around the pā. Stone anchors, as depicted in Best (1925:197), may have been necessary during spring tides.

On 6 September 1843 Barnicoat recorded not more than 'a dozen or 15 inhabitants' of Taupo Point *po* (Barnicoat 1841–1844). He also reported that 'we found here canoes belonging to natives staying here from other places. Some from Onahau in Queen Charlotte Sound'. These visiting Māori were passing through to attend a funeral in Golden Bay. Taupo Point was situated on one of the *pounamu* or green stone trading routes from the West Coast of the South Island. It was probably one of the stopover points for *waka* travelling up the West Coast, heading towards the eastern and northern parts of the South Island and the North Island (Prichard 1970: 4; Firth 1959; Robertson 2001: 17). A possible meaning of the word Taupo is 'night anchorage' (*tau*—to land, come to rest, settle on, ride at anchor; *pā*—darkness or night) but there are well known ancestral or mythical figures named 'Taupo', after whom the point could be named (John Mitchell, 2014, pers. comm., 13 March).

The Witsen illustration from Tasman's visit shows four *waka* on the southern beach (Fig. 7). One of these *waka* shows a mast and what appears to be a structure on the



Figure 12. The position of the baches at Taupo Point is shown in this map titled *Land Acquired from Crockford Blocks I, II, III & IV* (Tōtaranui Survey District Local Authority: Golden Bay Council Nelson Land District. File: A.T. 13/14, dated 14 June 1972).

stern or possibly an outrigger. Barnicoat's 1844 illustration shows two *waka* on the southern beach, two *waka* on the northern beach and two *waka* in the water, totalling six vessels. Compared to the small resident population in Wainui Bay in 1844 for whom two *waka* would have been sufficient, the number of *waka* recorded in the Barnicoat illustration is high. This suggests a possible reason for Māori to modify the beach in order to safely accommodate local and visiting craft in demarcated landing areas.

### History of Taupo Pā in the 19th century

Frederick Tuckett, the first European to have landed at Taupo Point in March 1842, estimated the Māori population at Taupo to be 20 (Tuckett 1842: 19). The next visitors were a party under Captain Arthur Wakefield on 1 September 1842 (*Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle*, 1 October 1842: 30; Westrupp 2007: 74). Three further records of the Māori population at Taupo Point for the years 1845 to 1847 range from 14 to 16 (Reay 1925: 54–55; Mackay 1872: 272).

The original occupants of Taupo Point, members of the Ngāti Tumatakokiri tribe, were successfully invaded c. 1813 both by Ngāti Apa from the north and by Ngāi Tahu from the south. Ngāti Apa occupied Golden Bay until 1828, when they were displaced by an alliance of Te Atiawa, Ngāti Rarua and Ngāti Tama from Taranaki, who were allied to Te Rauparaha's Ngāti Toa (Mack 2004: 18). In a reference to the 1828 invasion, Māori living at Taupo Point told John Barnicoat in 1843 that:

...there was formerly a Pah on the Peninsular but Rauparo [i.e. the Ngāti Toa chief Te Rauparaha] destroyed it and killed all the inhabitants some time ago (Barnicoat 1841–1844).

The Māori whom surveyor John Barnicoat and others encountered at Taupo Point and Wainui Bay were likely

to have been Ngāti Tama apart, perhaps, from slaves (Mack 2004: 18). Between the years 1845 and 1849 there are 5 records for the Māori population in the whole of Wainui Bay including Taupo Point, Takapou and Uarau. The Māori population in Wainui Bay decreased from a high of 69 in 1846, to 26 in 1849 (Reay 1925: 54–55; Mitchell and Mitchell 2009: 79; Mackay 1872: 272).

In 1856 two blocks had been reserved for Māori at Taupo Point and the Taupo Point Reserve was vested in chief Paramena Haereiti of Ngāti Tama (Mitchell & Mitchell 2007: 60). In 1896 Paramena Haereiti sold 900 acres of land in Wainui Bay to Francis Elias Robertson (Jim Robertson, 2012, pers. comm. 21 Dec.). Around 1900 Francis Robertson began felling and clearing his land (Robertson 1972: 2–3; Robertson 1989: 8–9). By 1900 most Māori had moved away from Taupo Point and Takapou and lived on the western side of the Wainui River. After the death of Paramena in 1902, all remaining Māori left to live with relatives in Motueka (Jim Robertson, 2012, pers. comm., 21 Dec.). The Robertson family has subsequently been the biggest landowner in Wainui Bay but the Taupo Point Reserve was not included in their holdings (Jim Robertson, 2012, pers. comm., 21 Dec.).

The level of occupation by Māori at Taupo Point between 1847 and 1900 is uncertain. Hilary and John Mitchell have researched written and oral Māori history of the northern part of the South Island (Mitchell & Mitchell 2004; 2007; 2009). They summarize the Māori occupation of Wainui Bay from 1840 to the present time as follows:

There seems to have been an exodus of the remaining permanent resident Maori from Wainui when Paramena died c. 1902. Nevertheless, many of those with Native Reserve land interests around that bay continued to live at Motupipi and Takaka, and from there frequented their properties at Wainui.

There may not have been permanent occupation of Taupo by Maori a decade or two after colonisation, since the centre of commerce had moved to the arable lands of Golden Bay, including the flat land at the head of Wainui Bay. Nevertheless, Maori did not abandon their interest in the area, and probably continued to occupy Taupo on a temporary basis for seasonal fishing or casual enjoyment. John Mitchell's whanau and his own age cohort (superstitious father notwithstanding) were frequent visitors to the Wainui reserves, including Taupo and Wharawharangi further east towards Separation Point. Local Maori still go there frequently; a *pounamu tohu* was installed on top of Taupo Head a few years ago by local Maori as a sort of mark of historical connection to that magic place (Hilary & John Mitchell, 2014, pers. comm., 21 March).

### Post 1850 European Activity in Wainui Bay and at Taupo Point

European settlers have frequently visited the bays and beaches around Wainui Bay since the 1840s and the authors considered the possibility that the canoe landing sites were constructed by European settlers.





Figure 13. Walter Holmwood at the Taupo Point bach belonging to the Robertson/Holmwood families (Photo: A. Mackenzie, between 1955 and 1974).



Figure 14. Cliff on the beach to the South of Taupo Point (Photo: R. Mack).

#### *Public access to Taupo Point*

There has never been road access to Taupo Point. The nearest road is approximately 2.5 km from Taupo Point. Access is by boat or on foot over rough terrain, which has restricted the number of visitors.

#### *Farming at Taupo Point*

Prior to the 1974 incorporation into the Abel Tasman National Park, the coastal area from Wainui Bay to Separation Point was only used for sheep farming. Sheep were driven along the beach and loaded into boats at Uarau Point where, to date, there is still a beach cottage or bach (Jim Robertson, 2012, pers. comm., 21 Dec.).

#### *Fishing and recreational boating near Taupo Point*

The bay to the south of Taupo Point is a popular anchorage for fishing boats or other pleasure craft during inclement weather. As the images from 1642, 1844, 1956 and 2012 show, there are places on the beach where small boats could be safely pulled ashore. Modern recreational fishing activities at Taupo Point would not have needed to further modify the beach. For larger boats temporarily looking for shelter there is good anchorage on the sandy bottom close to the shore.

#### *Permanent structures near Taupo Point*

In the 1920s and 1930s Lawrence Manson took over the mortgages of all the farmers from Separation Point to Wainui River (Anne McKenzie, 2013, pers. comm., 15 September). In 1953 John and Mary Crockford bought 2000 acres of land from Separation Point to Wainui from Royce Manson. There have never been any permanent houses or structures erected by European settlers at Taupo Point except for two baches, which were erected in the 1950s.

The first bach belonged to the Robertson/Holmwood families and was built in 1955–1957 (Anne McKenzie, 2013, pers. comm., 15 September). The other bach,

further east, belonged to Alfred Bickley. It was built in 1950–51. Both baches were demolished in 1974 as part of the establishment of the Abel Tasman National Park (Anne Mackenzie, 2013, pers. comm., 15 September). The Robertson/Holmwood bach was approximately three 3 m by 3 m in size (Fig. 13). The Bickley bach was also of a very small size as it cannot be identified in an aerial photograph taken on 8 February 1952 (New Zealand Aerial Mapping 2013). Both buildings were only used for short visits. The transport of building material for these structures did not require beach modifications at Taupo Point (Jim Robertson, 2012, pers. comm., 21 Dec.).

#### *Lime mining and burning at Taupo Point*

There were two types of limestone mining in Golden Bay, namely large scale industrial mining and cottage industry mining for local use. The earliest reference to the mining of limestone in Golden Bay is in 1842 at Tata Beach (*Nelson Examiner* 30 April 1842: 30). From then on Golden Bay became an important source of limestone. The main mining area was initially at Motupipi followed by the Tata Islands and Tarakohe (*Nelson Examiner* 11 June 1862: 3; Bell 1907: 19). The *Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle* (1842–1874) and the *Nelson Evening Mail* (1866–1918) report a continuous traffic of ships coming and going to ports and destinations in Golden Bay, namely Motupipi, Collingwood and the Tata Islands but an extensive search of newspaper archives did not show a single shipping arrival from Taupo Point.

Limestone mining at Taupo Point was for local use. Brailsford (1981: 82) suggests that the lime burning pits might date to the 1840s. Frederick Robertson in 1971 identified a number of shallow pits on the isthmus as 'lime burning pits of World War I vintage' (Walls 1972). Jim Robertson, descendant of Francis Robertson, remembered that at Taupo Point in the bank up from the beach there were two lime burning ovens. He states that they were still visible in the late 1940s but have since

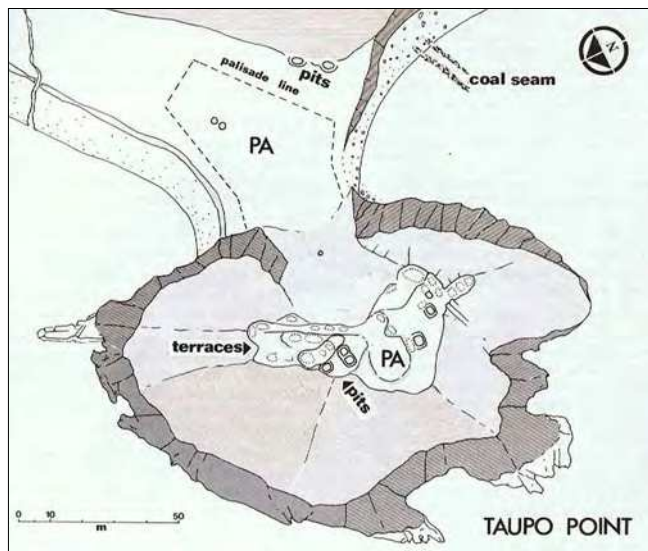


Figure 15. Map 38 of Taupo Point *Pā*, Wainui (S8/72) (Brailsford 1981: 82).

eroded away (Jim Robertson, 2012, pers. comm., 21 Dec.). It is possible that these ovens were covered by vegetation and soil. A photograph taken in 2012 shows that the cliff is composed of rock with a layer of soil and small trees at the top (Fig. 14). Some erosion of the bank facing the beach on the southern side might have occurred, however, this erosion was not big enough to change the structure of the beach and to cover the rock channels. When comparing the Barnicoat illustration from 1844 with photos taken in 2012 (Fig. 14) there is no visible sign of major erosion in the 168 years between them.

Jim Robertson is also of the opinion that lime burning at Taupo Point was done very early on and was finished by the time his family had bought the land in Wainui Bay (Jim Robertson, 2012, pers. comm., 21 Dec.). At Taupo Point limestone was burnt on the spot and then filled into sacks for transport. This would have been easily achievable with a boat at anchor in shallow water, pulled up for loading on the beach using the existing landing sites. Comparing the limestone tombolo of Taupo Point in the 1844 Barnicoat illustration and as it looks today there is little difference. This suggests that whatever mining took place at Taupo Point was small scale and intermittent, making it unnecessary for the lime burners to construct the rock channels observed today.

#### Oral history relating to Wainui Bay and environs

Post 1842 European activities at Taupo Point have not left a large imprint, and long-time residents confirm that the beach at Taupo Point has always looked the same in their lifetimes. The Taupo Point memories of Anne Mackenzie, daughter of John and Mary Crockford, go back to the 1960s while those of Jim Robertson, go back to his childhood years in the 1940s. Both confirm that the beach on the southern side of Taupo Point with the distinct lines of rocks has always looked as it does today (Anne McKenzie, 2013, pers. comm., 15 September; Jim Robertson, 2012, pers. comm., 21 Dec.). Jim Robertson

observed that after sheep farming ceased the vegetation on the flat land and hillsides increased. This is expected as the natural bush has regenerated on the headland *pā* area and on the surrounding slopes, while the beach area remains clear of undergrowth being regularly accessed by members of the public on foot.

When asked during the recorded interview whether he thought that the channels were made by Māori or by later 19th-century European settlers, Jim Robertson replied: “I would think they were done in Māori times. They wouldn’t drag their canoes across rocks”. He has observed over the years that the coal seam in the middle of the longest rock channel on the beach is occasionally covered for short periods by a layer of sand and is about 12–14 m long when fully exposed. As the coal seam is level with the beach, using it as a skid makes hauling boats out of the water much easier and quicker. It also causes less friction and wear on the boats. Robertson is certain that no family member sourced coal from this seam although large sources were found in the wider Golden Bay area. Frederick Tuckett, on a visit to Golden Bay in 1842, reported the discovery of coal near Motupipi, approximately 10 km west of Wainui Bay and in other locations in western Golden Bay but he did not mention seeing coal when visiting Taupo Point (Tuckett 1842).

#### Previous archaeological investigations at Taupo Point

The Taupo Point site is recorded as N25/50 in the New Zealand Archaeological Association Site Recording Scheme or Archsite, [www.archsite.org.nz](http://www.archsite.org.nz). ArchSite is the online database that holds the national inventory of archaeological sites in New Zealand, using Geographic Information System (GIS) technology to display the information on maps. The Archsite record for Taupo Point and the isthmus behind it contains reports from six earlier field investigations. Taupo Point was briefly described by Wilkes (1960) who observed that:

On the south side of the isthmus a considerable thickness of occupation material is exposed – blackened sand contains charcoal lumps, shells, oven stones 5”–6” in diameter, a few argillite flakes and a lump of rock crystal was noted. A burial is said to have been washed out from here. A less dense layer of occupational material is exposed on the north shore.

Wilkes (1960: 26; 1961) also noted vague, shallow pits on the isthmus. Walls’ (1972) visits in 1971 and 1972 added further observations:

The pits recorded by Owen Wilkes were observed but were described by Fred Robertson as lime burning pits of World War 1 vintage.

Jones (1980) investigated the limestone tombolo at Taupo Point and recorded at least six probable terraces on the rocky point. Brailsford (1981: 82–83) provides a description and a sketch map of Taupo Point, noting at least 25 terraces in the upper slopes of Taupo Point. He also observed a plateau on the crest, which was levelled for



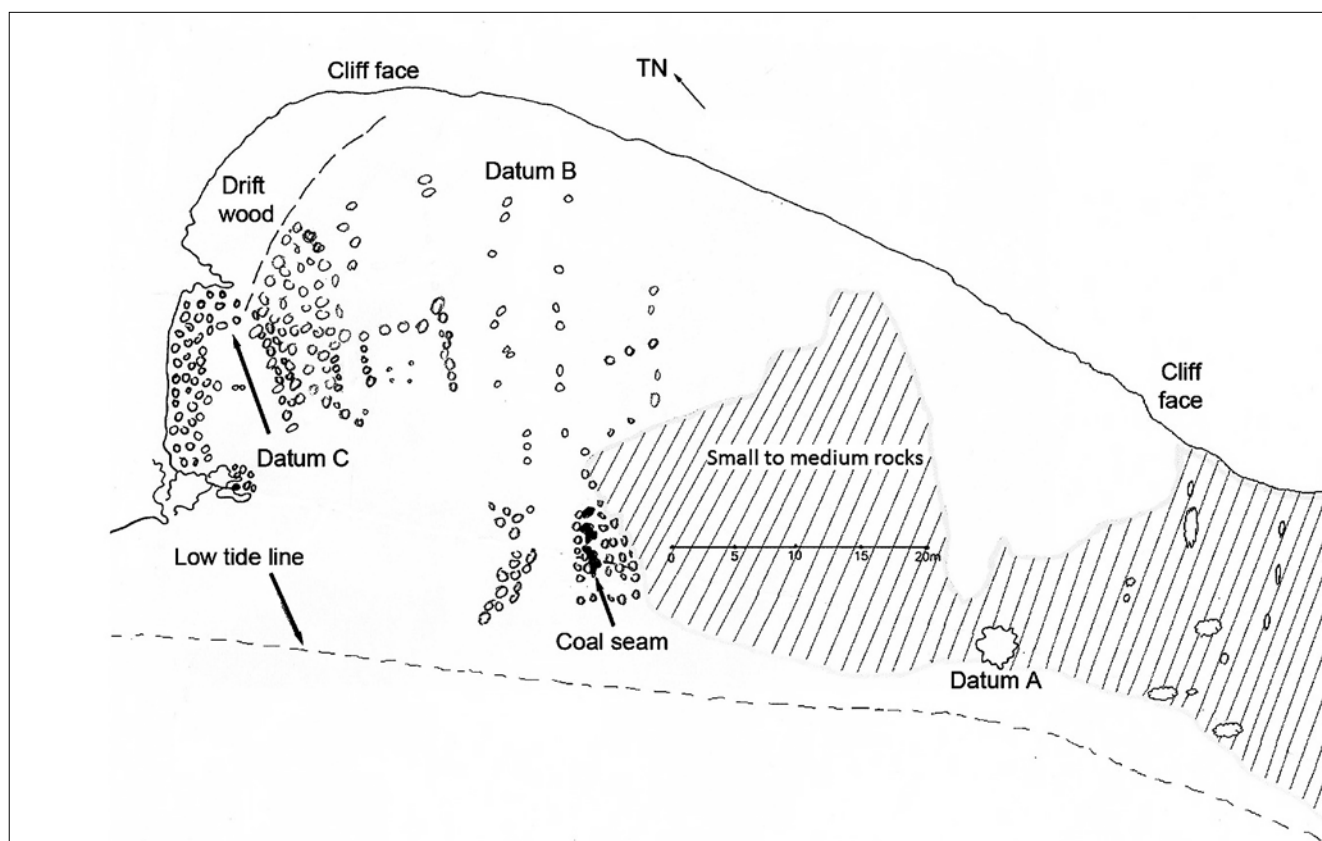


Figure 16. Scale map of the Taupo Point beach survey (R. Hawarden & R. Mack).

occupation, and noted five large pits near the crest. He also mentions the discovery of a burial in 1967. Brailsford also mentions middens and pits on the flat land of the isthmus. He suggests that two of these pits 'are possibly lime-burning pits of very early European origin, dating back to the 1840s' (Brailsford 1981: 82).

Barber (1994: 542, 912) collected and analysed surface samples of vertebrate fauna from an eroding midden in 1991. Barber (1994) suggests a post 1650 CE date for the earliest settlement of Taupo Point, as he assumed that Taupo Point was not occupied at the time of Abel Tasman's brief visit in 1642. This assumption by Barber was based on the illustration of Wainui Bay in the official journal of Tasman's expedition which does not show as many details as the Witsen illustration (Barber 1994: 291; 1992: 49–50; Sharp 1968: 130).

There has been no in-depth archaeological excavation in the area but Brailsford (1981: 82) noted the position of terraces, pits and middens. At the same time a few artefacts such as adze and argillite flakes were collected. In 1967 a skull was found and reported by Jim Robertson (Brailsford 1981: 82). There are also recorded finds of greenstone (Robertson 2001: 17). The canoe landing sites are not mentioned in any of these visits but Brailsford (1981) includes the main channel in his sketch of Taupo Point without referring to it in the text (Fig. 15). His sketch map also shows the coal seam at the bottom of the main channel. The focus of the 2012 UHG investigation solely related to the canoe landing sites.

These prominent landmarks had been largely omitted in previous investigations.

#### A comparable canoe landing site in the South Island

Another precolonial *tauranga waka* in the South Island at Menzies Bay, Banks Peninsula (New Zealand Archaeological Association Site Recording Scheme N36/60), was investigated as a comparison site. At Menzies Bay a channel of similar size to the rock channels at Taupo Point was created in a boulder bank (Brailsford 1981: 175).



Figure 17. The main rock channel from the low tide mark with the coal seam on the right (Photo: B. Alexander).



Figure 18. The area cleared of rocks for landing canoes and bringing in nets against the cliff face of Taupo Point (Photo: R. Mack)



Figure 19. The top of the cleared area shown in Figure 18 close to high tide (Photo: R. Mack).

This *tauranga waka* is known to have been constructed by Māori before colonization and existed at the time the first Europeans visited this bay in the 1840s (Brailsford 1981: 175; Ogilvie 2007: 99; Menzies 1970). It was associated with the nearby *kāinga*, Kirikiri Whare, which was abandoned in the late 1820s (Menzies 1970: 58). The canoe landing site has been used and occasionally maintained by the resident Menzies family since the 1870s. In the late 1990s, and subsequent to a photograph taken by Brailsford in 1975 (Brailsford 1981: 175), a large rock was moved to one side at low tide with a bull dozer (1981: 175) (Rik Menzies, 2014, pers. comm., 2 March).

### Methodology

A search of the New Zealand Archaeological Site Recording Scheme for canoe landings and *tauranga waka* was undertaken for this research project. Public and private photograph and film archives were searched for images of Taupo Point showing beach modifications. These included the archives of The Air Force Museum of New Zealand, the Golden Bay Museum and Gallery, the Nelson Provincial Museum, the Hocken Library—University of Otago, the Alexander Turnbull Library, and the Whites Aviation Ltd, the New Zealand Aerial Mapping Ltd, and the V.C. Browne and Son aerial photograph collections. Advertisements were placed in the Golden Bay Weekly newspaper seeking photographs and memories of Taupo Point from local residents.

In December 2012, after a preliminary visit to Taupo Point, a non-disturbance site survey of the beach was conducted at low tide (Fig. 16). The site was photographed and a visual search was undertaken for any remaining evidence of the lime burning kilns. Additionally, the coal seam was examined and found to show no signs of mining (Fig. 17). The two major canoe landing sites were measured using the baseline/offset method. Establishing a datum point from a permanent landmark presented a few issues. There was no clear high tide water mark and the fresh debris at the cliff base indicated that the highest

tides covered the whole beach area. Two datum points were selected: datum point A, being the large rock in the intertidal zone and datum point B, being a point 6.2 m from the cliff face to the centre of the channel of the largest canoe landing site where the first stones commenced. A third related datum point, C, was determined at the top of the small canoe landing site against the cliff at the central point of its cleared rocks. In all three cases the baseline was run down the centre of the channel into the sea and offsets measured at 1 m intervals to the central point of prominent stones on each side of the baseline.

The comparison canoe landing site, the Menzies Bay, Banks Peninsula *tauranga waka* was surveyed by a UHG team on 2 March 2014 using the same baseline/offset method. Bruce Alexander, the surveyor, took beach gradient measurements at both sites.

### Results

A search of the New Zealand Archaeological Site Recording Scheme revealed 25 records of canoe landings. The Taupo Point *tauranga waka* is not recorded in the scheme. Many of these records are 'reported' sites or based on traditional or documentary accounts where little visible evidence is left at surface level. There are other known maritime structures built by Māori such as canals, fish traps and wharves. Some of these structures have disappeared as a result of storms, floods, silting up of coastal areas, earthquakes, or human interference and redevelopment (Skinner 1912; Beckett 1957; Northcroft & Bennett 1964). The Taupo Point and the Menzies Bay landing sites are rare examples of canoe landing sites still used by boats today.

The photograph of the surveyed area (Fig. 3) at Taupo Point shows that there is ample space for six to ten canoes on the beach. Witsen (1705) depicts four canoes at Taupo Point, while figure 12, Barnicoat's drawing (1844), shows two canoes on the southern beach and two on the northern beach. The cleared stone channels are more clearly observed in a photograph from an elevated position





Figure 20. Beach south from Taupo Point at the lowest ebb of low tide (Photo: R. Mack December 2012).



Figure 21. Photograph of the Menzies Bay canoe landing site (Photo: R. Hawarden 2 March 2014).

than at ground level. Some of the channels and cleared areas are eroding and dispersing, seemingly related to their exposure to the weather, as these areas are further away from the lee of the peninsula.

The two major canoe landing sites on Taupo Point south beach were surveyed. The beach gradient was constant ranging across the site from 1 in 11 to 1 in 12, giving a shallow sloping beach. In December 2012 approximately 7 m of the coal seam were visible (Figs 16 & 17). From datum point B, the larger central channel was 28 m long to the lower end of the coal seam and then extends 10 m to the low water mark. The channel was 6 m at its widest, and 4 m at its narrowest, with an average width of 4.5 m. The smaller channel against the cliff face from datum point C to a rock pile next to three large boulders at the low water mark was 16 m long. This channel was 6 m at its widest and similarly 4.5 m at its narrowest. This channel appeared to have been cleared to make use of the greatest protection from north-easterly weather by tucking a *waka* up against the cliff face (Figs 16–19). There is a large area between the two surveyed channels near the low tide line where rocks were cleared. Further up from this cleared area are two or possibly three eroding channels. There are also two connected areas approximately 20 m south of the main channel and above datum A, which appear to have been cleared of rocks and are now also eroding and not as clearly demarcated as the two surveyed channels. The channel width of 4.5 m at Taupo Point beach means that it would be possible to haul out both single and narrow double hulled canoes, provided the double hulled canoes did not exceed 3.5 m in width. This channel width would also allow for the haul out of single hulled *waka* with a diameter of 3 m or a double hulled *waka* with each hull having a diameter of 1 m and a transverse clearance of 1 m between the two hulls. In addition, there would be sufficient space to allow for haulers to walk on either side of the *waka* without having to negotiate rocks and stones.

A photograph taken at low tide (Fig. 20) shows that the landing sites near the large rock, datum A, are only

accessible at high tide. The main rock channel is cleared of rocks right down to the sandy areas. The channels between the main channel and the cliff face of Taupo Point are not cleared of rocks as far down as the main channel. The different lengths suggest that a range of channels were constructed to accommodate *waka* of varying sizes at variable tide levels.

### Discussion and conclusion

A detailed examination of the first printed illustration of New Zealand by Witsen (1705) of the encounter of Dutch explorers with Māori in canoes, revealed images of canoes beached at three locations in Wainui Bay, Golden Bay. As these locations were identified by Mack (2004; 2006) as recognisable sites in Wainui Bay and correlated with existing archaeological sites, closer examination of the Taupo Point site was undertaken as the south beach has been noticeably modified to form a canoe and net landing site. A photograph taken in 1956 (Fig. 5) and oral history (Jim Robertson 2012, pers. comm., 21 Dec.), suggest that the extant rock channels have not changed over many years and were regarded as precolonial. The Witsen (1705) image suggests that some of the beach modifications may pre-date the arrival of the Dutch expedition under Abel Tasman on 18 December 1642.

The single channel *tauranga waka* in the South Island at Menzies Bay, Banks Peninsula (New Zealand Archaeological Association Site Recording Scheme N25/50) is of a similar size to the large Taupo Point channel, being 32.4 m long and from 3.9 to 4.6 m wide. This canoe landing is also a stable beach structure with photographic evidence showing it too has remained unchanged for almost 40 years. Individual rocks could be identified from Brailsford's photograph from 1975 still *in situ*. The 2010–11 Canterbury earthquakes had no visible impact on this site. This *tauranga waka* was constructed below the former north facing *kāinga* site at the head of the bay. At this point the incoming current turns, circulates across the bay and exits on the far side where the current wharf is today. This landing site was

constructed to take advantage of the incoming current into the bay with easy access to the *kāinga* even though a cleared beach area exists on the other side of the bay.

The authors conclude that Māori were skilled in observing local weather and water conditions and selected protected and stable maritime environments for their canoe landing sites. As travel by water took place extensively in both pre- and post-colonial times, convenient access to such places would have been one of the factors considered in choosing the location of unfortified villages and *pā*.

Rock clearing was undertaken in order to beach and store canoes safely, bring in fishing nets without getting them tangled and damaged on rocks as well as safe swimming. As the Taupo Point site admirably fulfilled many of the needs of local Māori for a defensible area, easy access to food and marine resources, fresh water, and accessible safe water travel, the authors postulate that this site became settled early on by Māori. Further archaeological research and radiocarbon dating could confirm this.

Taupo Point may have been part of a well-established trade network being conveniently located between the western parts of Golden Bay and Tasman Bay to the east. Taupo Point should also be considered as an important stop over point for travel in the wider Golden Bay area to and from the West Coast green stone sites. The landing site was also used by visitors travelling along the coast as a convenient and safe place to stay overnight or to find shelter in storms.

Taupo Point was either permanently or intermittently inhabited by Māori from prior to 1642 to 1849. As no organic material from the Taupo Point site has been radiocarbon dated to support this interpretation, it would be desirable to analyse and to date the occupational layers at Taupo Point to determine when this area was first settled and whether occupation was permanent or seasonal. The assumed original inhabitants, Ngāti Tumatakokiri, were driven out by Ngāti Apa in 1813 who themselves were displaced by Ngāti Rarua, Ngāti Tama and Te Atiawa in 1828. There are no population records before 1842 and those made in subsequent years show a small and declining population with a final departure of the remaining descendants as the European farmers bought up and occupied the land. The area around Taupo Point itself has not been extensively farmed apart from being used for grazing sheep and the building of two baches. As there was no permanent European settlement at Taupo Point there was rarely the need to haul up boats on a beach overnight and when this needed to be done the existing canoe landing sites were sufficient. It is quite possible that the channels have occasionally been modified and cleared of rocks since the end of permanent Māori occupation, as occurred at the Menzies Bay landing site. Its current status as part of the Abel Tasman National Park and on-going interest and involvement by local *iwi* has also contributed to the excellent preservation of the beach structures. These stone beach modifications may be one of the few remaining pre-European contact Māori

maritime structures in New Zealand.

In measuring the length and width of the canoe haulages this article contributes to the discussion on the number and size of early *waka* in the Golden Bay area and the possible maximum sizes reached. The beach at Taupo Point could accommodate six to ten canoes on the protected south beach and more on the north beach, which would have been usable in fair weather. The average width of the channels at 4.5 m indicates a maximum hull diameter of 3.5 m for a single hulled canoe and a width of 4 m for a double hulled canoe. The authors are unable to assess the length of the canoes from the size of the landing sites, but examination of the Witsen illustration (1705) shows 11 people in a *waka*. The Tasman journal mentions 13 to 17 people in each canoe. Assuming each person occupies a metre and the canoes are double hulled, this assumes a minimum canoe size of 9 m. With a canoe haul out of over 30 m long, very large canoes could be accommodated. The Witsen (1705) image showing a beached canoe with a single mast and no sails at Taupo Point supports the image and reference in the official Tasman journal to a single canoe with a lateen sail (Heeres 1898; Sharp 1968: 130). Further research into the design and rig of Māori vessels as observed and depicted by the 1642 Tasman expedition is required.

The Witsen (1705: 171) illustration is the only illustration connected to Abel Tasman's visit in 1642 which shows signs of occupation at known historic Māori settlements in Golden Bay. Witsen (1705: 172) includes four images of the Tongan and New Guinea coast lines from Abel Tasman's 1642–43 expedition, all of which differ from the illustrations of the same areas in the official Abel Tasman journal (Sharp 1968: 160–161, 166–167, 217, 245). An investigation comparing the Witsen illustrations of Tonga and New Guinea with the illustrations in the official journal may prove useful. If these other Witsen images of Tonga and New Guinea can be accurately correlated to the landscape, historians and archaeologists will gain an improved understanding of the conditions prevailing in this important contact period.

The study of maritime structures built by indigenous people is an area that should be researched further in New Zealand and the wider Pacific. Beach modifications are under researched and have not been given sufficient recognition as an important aspect of cultural heritage and evidence for ancient trade routes. Surviving examples in the Pacific need to be preserved and their relationship to land structures better understood. Many of these may encompass significant engineering feats but being constructed with natural materials may have been overlooked (Hawarden 2011). They can also provide evidence for the type and size of watercraft accommodated based on natural coastal and beach characteristics as well as any maritime structural evidence present. This may include a simple clearing of rocks as in this case study or a sophisticated wharf or dock. Rising sea levels and climate change is likely to endanger remaining sites and rescue archaeology needs to include beach structures in its scope.



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