

# **SPEEDIES ROAD HYDRO SCHEME PROPOSAL**

## **AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT**

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## INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

The purpose of the archaeological assessment was to identify any historical resources, particularly those of Maori origin, which might be impacted by the proposed Speedies Road Hydro scheme on the Tawarau River, west of Waitomo. The survey did not include associated transmission line routes.

Previously (June 1987), a preliminary Feasibility Study had been undertaken by Worley Consultants on behalf of the local power authority, the Waitomo Electric Power Board. The location of all the major features associated with the proposed power scheme are outlined in the pre-feasibility study. Subsequently Worley Consultants were commissioned to undertake further public consultation and fulfil resource consent requirements including arranging an archaeological assessment in compliance with the provisions of the Historic Places Act 1993.

The survey was directed by Dr Neville A Ritchie, a result of the tangata whenua expressing a personal preference for the writer to do the work.

## BACKGROUND RESEARCH

The N.Z. Archaeological Association's Waikato file was consulted to ascertain if there were any recorded sites in the impact area. This revealed there was only one recorded site (R16/531) in the Tawarau catchment- a one-time Maori settlement called Waimakea in the vicinity of the farm homestead (now occupied by the manager Hayden Lewis). The location of this site is shown on the original subdivision survey map (W. Cussen 1895), with the annotation "old settlement" beside it (Fig.1). The map depicts it as being in a clearing (c200m in diameter) amid an extensive tract of manuka, presumably the aftermath of Maori bush-clearing in pre-European times.

A perfunctory inspection of the Lewis' homestead area by Owen Wilkes, (the N.Z. Archaeological Association's Waikato filekeeper) in January 1995 during the course of a site survey of the lower Marakopa valley, revealed no apparent remains of the recorded settlement. Regardless, if any survive, they will not be threatened by the hydro dam proposal.

The writer notes that according to speakers at a public meeting held on 9 March 1995 to discuss the hydro proposal, reference was made to "17 tonne of eels being taken from the Tawarau last year" and there "used to be four eel weirs on the river". Eeling, along with birding and some cultivation, may have been a major activity conducted at Waikorea. The District Surveyor L. Cussen (1885, W Cussen's brother), reported that the Marakopa River was navigable for canoes as far as Te Anga which would have afforded relatively easy transport to the coast and further afield.

The only other recorded site in the general area is Puketutu pa (site R16/211, also known as Te Koipo pa, Phillips 1989:182) situated on a high point some 3km north of the Tawarau River. It too, was once the centre of an extensive cleared area amid manuka (Cussens 1895).

## LAND FORM AND CURRENT USE

The proposed dam would be positioned on the Tawarau River 3km upstream of its junction with the Marakopa River. Access is via Speedies Rd, a no-exit farm access road, which branches from the Waitomo-Marakopa Rd at Te Anga (Fig.2).

For the mostpart the land bordering Speedies Rd is flat and gently sloping developed pasture-land. From the roadend, above the Lewis' homestead, the valley floor and lower slopes are hummocky and littered with large pieces of detrital limestone and outcrops. Beyond these extend steep limestone escarpments which form the valley walls. From the end of Speedies Rd a farm road provides access to the vicinity of the proposed dam site (and the back of the farm) and into the wooded country beyond. This road, now closed to public traffic, was once known as the "pick and shovel" road. It extends to Ngapaenga and was used to take milk to the dairy factory there (O.Wilkes pers.comm.).

All the construction activity associated with the power scheme including the 1.3km long inundation area in the gorge (with the exception of esplanade reserve along the river margins) is within the farm owned by M & M Paterson and managed by Mr Hayden Lewis. The scheme would utilise a 45m fall in the river between the dam site and a powerhouse to be built above the river near the end of Speedies Rd. The water will be conveyed between the dam and the powerhouse by a 1km long pipeline (1.9m diameter) which for the mostpart would border the route of the existing farm access road. The latter would be upgraded to enable access for construction equipment. The proposed 16m high dam would be sited at the lower end of a steep forested gorge, on the margin of a large tract of mixed podocarp forest (part of the Tawarau State Forest) which extends to the south.

## SITE SURVEY

The site survey was undertaken on September 27 1995. Six persons were involved: Dr Neville Ritchie and Ms Cathy Barr (Archaeologists, Department of Conservation, Hamilton, Mr Ray Scrimgeour, DoC Field Centre Manager, Te Kuiti), Mr Pat Moreland, Generation Manager, Waitomo Power Board), and Messrs Pat Stafford and Bill Barlow (Maniopoto Maori kaumatua).

After meeting at the roadend, and ascertaining from the kaumatua that they were unaware of any Maori sites in the area which would be affected by the dam, the party was divided into two groups: Ms Barr and Mr Scrimgeour traversed the farmlands on the true right (the northeast side) of the river, while the rest of the group examined the true left (southwest side) of the valley between the roadend and the dam site, paying particular attention to the possibility of occupied rockshelters or caves under the numerous limestone outcrops and boulders. As this area is developed farmland with small patches of scrub, ground visibility was 70%-100%. No archaeological sites or features were identified during the course of these pedestrian surveys.

Once the proposed dam site is reached the topography and vegetation changes dramatically. Here the river flows through a steep sided gorge and the slopes are covered with dense vegetation. Ground visibility is virtually nil. Given this situation and the relatively high level of the river, no attempt was made to examine the steep river margins

which would be inundated by the dam.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

As noted above, no archaeological features of pre-European or early European origin were identified on the open farmland (i.e. the area where the powerhouse, transmission facilities, pipeline, and construction facilities would be located). In my professional opinion, this area can be regarded as having an archaeological clearance for the purposes of resource consent applications and with regard to fulfilling the archaeological requirements of the Historic Places Act 1993. It should be noted, however, given the subsurface nature of archaeological deposits, and the existence of the one-time Maori settlement Waimakea in the vicinity of the Lewis homestead, that cultural material may be uncovered during the course of construction work on the property. If this eventuates, work should cease, and appropriate iwi representatives and a qualified archaeologist contacted.

The dam site and the margins of the impoundment area were not specifically examined because it was considered impractical to do so given the steep slopes and density of the vegetation at this stage. However, if the dam project proceeds this area should be the subject of a separate survey after the vegetation is removed. Based on experience elsewhere there is a very low probability of the existence of historic places in the river gorge, because access to the gorge is difficult and the slopes are prohibitively steep for most human activities. If a survey of this area is considered necessary at this juncture, it should be made when the river flow is very low to facilitate safe access to either bank. However, the sheer slopes and present dense ground cover are likely to make any inspection (prior to vegetation clearing) a somewhat futile exercise.

## REFERENCES

Cussen, L. 1885 The Triangulation of the King Country, Auckland. Appendices to the Journal of the House of Representatives 3 Geographical Surveys: 21-25.

Cussen, W. 1895 part Plan of Kinohaku West Subdivisions. South Auckland Land District ML 6614 DOSLI, Hamilton. [Fig.1 reproduced from tracing of original by O Wilkes April 1994].

Worley Consultants 1987 Speedies Road Hydro Scheme. Pre-Feasibility Study for Waitomo Electric Power Board.

Worley Consultants 1995 Speedies Road Hydro: Notes of Public Meeting 9 March 1995

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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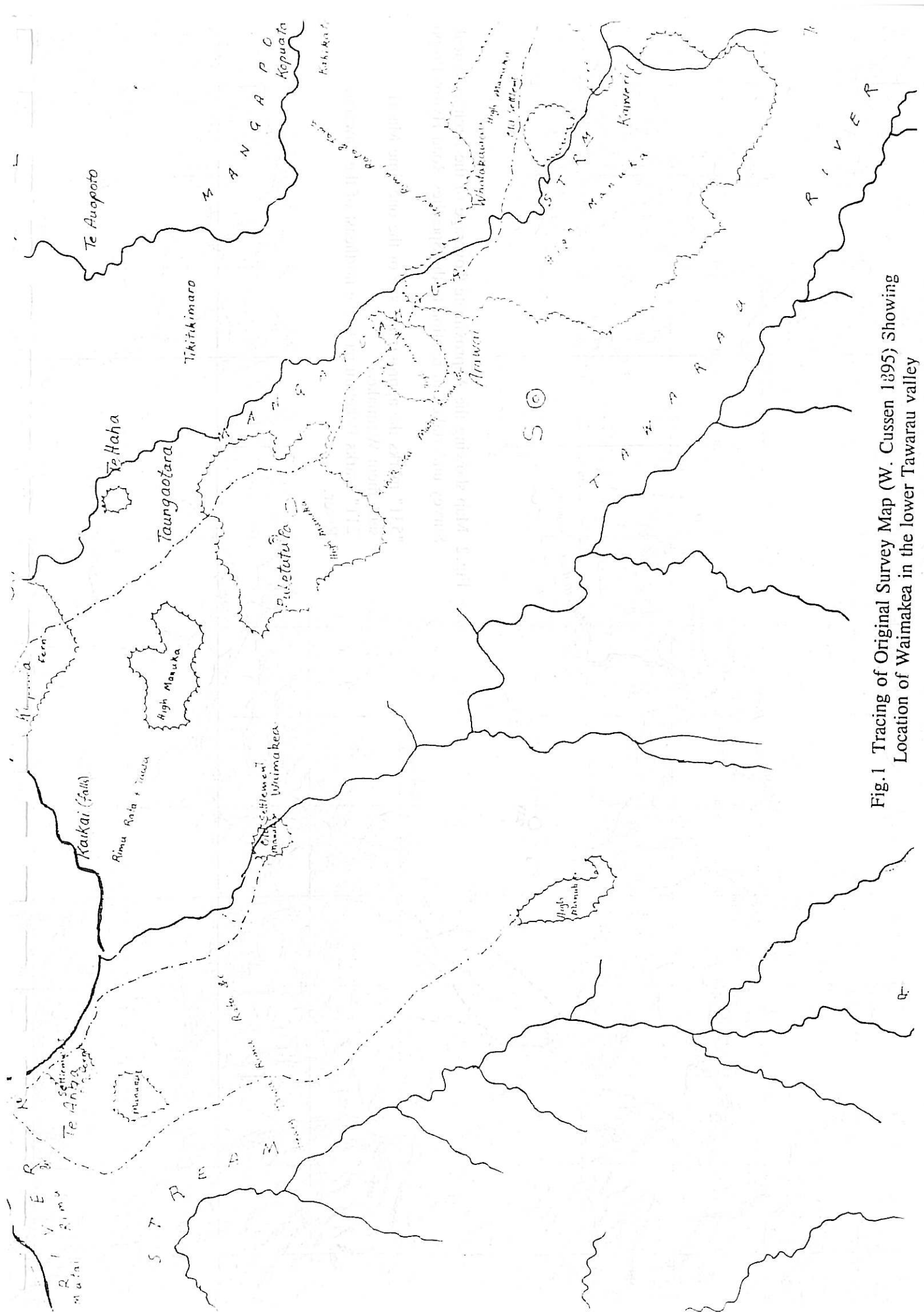


Fig.1 Tracing of Original Survey Map (W. Cussen 1895) Showing Location of Waimakea in the lower Tawarau valley



