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A DATED COLLECTION OF MATCHBOXES
FROM FORT GALATEA HISTORIC RESERVE, BAY OF PLENTY

Wynne Spring-Rice
Anthropology Department
University of Auckland

Recent excavations at historic sites of the mid-nineteenth century at Omata and Warea in Taranaki (Prickett, 1981), the Fort Galatea redoubts (Spring-Rice, 1980 and 1981), and at gold-miners' camps in Central Otago (Ritchie, 1980:82; D. Anson, pers. comm.) have yielded numbers of tin wax vesta matchboxes. The collection from Fort Galatea (Fig. 1) is useful in that it can be dated precisely, and the sources of supply for those who used the boxes at different stages of the fort's occupation can be suggested. There have been five excavations at Fort Galatea between January 1980 and April 1981 and the material is at present being prepared for a Master's thesis.

The establishment of Fort Galatea

Fort Galatea was the last of a chain of forts along the Rangitaiki River established by Colonel Whitmore and his 100 European and 200 Maori Armed Constabulary and other forces in May 1869. He ultimately planned to set up a headquarters at Taupo. The original fort at Galatea was intended only to form a depot for supplies to be protected by a small garrison while the main force was in the Ureweras campaigning against Te Kooti and his allies. The palisades and bank of a small Maori kainga called Karamuramu (Fig. 2), comprising a couple of ruined whare, were strengthened by the addition of earth thrown against them on the inside (Newall, ms: 4 May 1869; n.d.:161). The site named Fort Galatea is probably the redoubt built the next day (Best, 1925:616).

Preece and Mair's Native Contingents

After Te Kooti's escape to the King Country following the August 1869 engagement at Te Porere and the inauguration of the new Fox government's policy of reduction in military expenditure (Dalton, 1967:273; and see Whitmore, 1902:182, 187) the forces were withdrawn from the Rangitaiki River forts. However, in February 1870 Te Kooti returned to the Ureweras via Ohinemutu (Rotorua) and the Taupaki ford, half a mile down-river from the now empty Fort Galatea. Captains George Preece and Gilbert Mair were each ordered to raise a force of one hundred Maori troops. These groups, known as the Native Contingent, were to be stationed at forts at Te Teko, on the lower Rangitaiki River, and at Kaiteriria, a pa on the Green

Lake near Rotorua, and were to rendezvous periodically at Fort Galatea, where there was to be a small permanent force. The troops were to patrol the western edges of the Ureweras, making sorties into its wild, densely-forested ridges and ravines in an endeavour to capture Te Kooti. These operations ceased after Te Kooti finally escaped to the King Country in May 1872 (Preece, ms:17 May 1872). The force spent the next two years road-making and bridge-building (Preece, ms:1873 and 1874; Mair, ms:1873 and 1874).

The 1875 earthwork

In 1875 (AJHR, 1875:H-10) a new earthwork redoubt with wooden barracks inside was built by the Armed Constabulary about 120 m back from the edge of the river terrace (Fig. 2). Some 30 m from the redoubt's western side a 5x4 m pit was dug. This is thought to have been used for stores. At the same time on the Karamuramu site, two sunken whare, supposed on rather tenuous evidence (Preece, ms:11 December 1873) to have been used by Captain Mair, were burned and deliberately filled with earth. On excavation, various artefacts including matchboxes (Figs. 3a and b; Table 1) were recovered here. The defensive works protecting this site, comprising ditches (and presumably banks) on two sides of a square with a flanking angle, were filled in and, on excavation, matchboxes were recovered from here also (Fig. 3a and b;

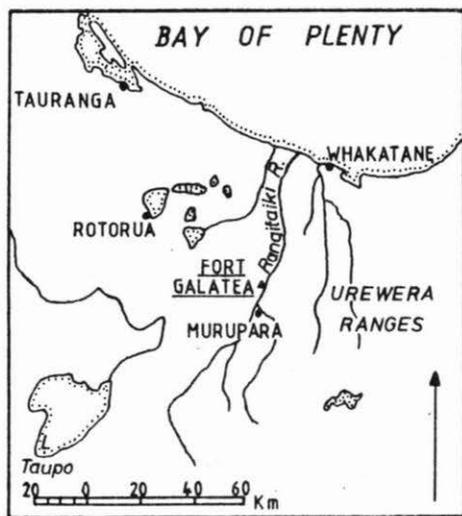


FIGURE 1. Location map.

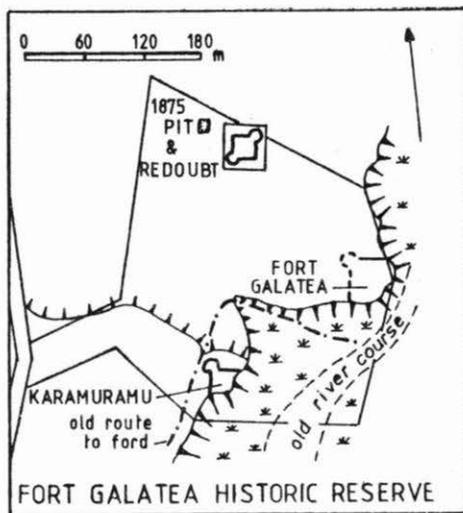


FIGURE 2. Map of reserve.

Table 1). The levelling of this area preceded the building of wooden officers' quarters. The buildings were used only until the latter part of 1876, when all troops were withdrawn (Hallett, ms: July 1876; AJHR, 1876:H-16 and 1877:H-11).

The school period

For a few months during 1877 the two buildings were used for a school under the auspices of the Native Department for children from the Ngati Manawa settlement about half a mile up the river. During the next year the officers' quarters were used briefly as a trading store, and the barracks as stables by H.P. Bluett, formerly Captain Preece's sergeant and afterwards owner of the Te Teko Hotel, but the venture was not a success (Education Department, ms: Duffus, 1880).

Artefacts recovered from our total excavation of the 1875 pit were consistent with use by Armed Constabulary personnel, and there were none which suggested use by a school teacher or a store keeper. The stratigraphy and the relatively small number of artefacts indicated that the pit had not been used as the redoubt's main rubbish dump over a lengthy period, but rather that one or two men had made a final clearing up of articles they had used and had thrown these into the pit and covered them with earth before the area's final abandonment. Thus the date attributed to these items is 1876.

In 1879 the Native Schools were transferred to the Education Department and after a request by the Maoris (Education Department, ms: Parakiri and others, 13 May 1880) the school was re-opened by G.E. Woods, using the barracks as the school and the officers' quarters as the teacher's residence.

On the night of 10 June 1886 Mt Tarawera erupted depositing on the Fort Galatea area about 5 cm of ash and a sparse scattering of lapilli, sealing the contents of the pit. There were earthquakes every night for a week, and the then teacher, Mrs M.E. Hooper, and her invalid husband and son were evacuated by the surveyor J.C. Blythe, while the Maoris from the settlement fled to their old village at Heruiwi on the Wheao River (Education Department, ms:files June 1886). The school remained closed for the rest of the year.

In February 1887 Joseph and Ellen Wylie and their family of five arrived to re-open the school. They brought with them three months supplies of provisions and all their belongings and household effects. In early April the residence was totally destroyed by fire about 2 a.m. The family managed to escape with their

bedding and packsaddles. The heat was so intense that all glass melted into small globules, stoneware, earthenware and china was cracked and broken and metal was buckled. The family took refuge in the barracks and were obliged to live there sharing this building with the school until two years later when the Department built a one-roomed school on the site of the fire. Before the school was erected some of the debris from the fire was raked into empty post-holes, the rest being left and lightly covered with soil which was later consolidated into a very hard surface through use as the school playground (Ethel Wylie, pers.comm.). The matchboxes from the Wylie fire can be dated to 1886 (Fig. 5b, c and d; Table 1) when they would have been purchased at Rotorua where the family were living prior to their move to Fort Galatea (the late M. Corlett, nee Wylie, pers. comm.; aged 10 at the time of the fire).

The matchboxes

The 61 matchboxes recovered from the excavations at Karamuramu and the 1875 pit were mostly in very poor condition being very rusty and encrusted with consolidated pumice grains, those which had been burnt in the whare and Wylie fires especially so. However, it was possible to identify the makes and method of manufacture for all except five very rusted or crushed boxes. There were distinct differences in size; the number of pieces comprising each variety, hinges and closure and presence or absence of a striking surface, i.e. a knobbed area on the base or the application of a sandy compound on the base or end of the box.

| Fig. Variety | Karamuramu (1875) | | Pit | Wylie fire |
|-------------------------|-------------------|---------------|--------|------------|
| | S whare | Ditch N whare | (1876) | (1887) |
| 3a Bell & Blacks | 3 | 2 | 1 | 5 |
| 3b Warranted-shield | 2 | 3 | - | 23 |
| 4a Warranted-crown | - | - | 1 | 5 |
| 4b Warranted-Dowler's | - | - | 4 | - |
| 5a all in one base | - | - | 1 | - |
| 5b Bell & Blacks (var.) | - | - | - | - |
| 5c Belgian Mars | - | - | - | - |
| 5d Bryant & May | - | - | - | - |
| - Bryant & May (round) | - | - | - | - |
| - unidentifiable | - | 1 | - | 2 |

TABLE 1. Makes of matchboxes from the different sites.

Bell and Blacks 15 Bow Lane Cheapside London (Figs 3a and 5b). The boxes made for this firm are variable and it is possible that with further dated collections a chronology could be established. Bell

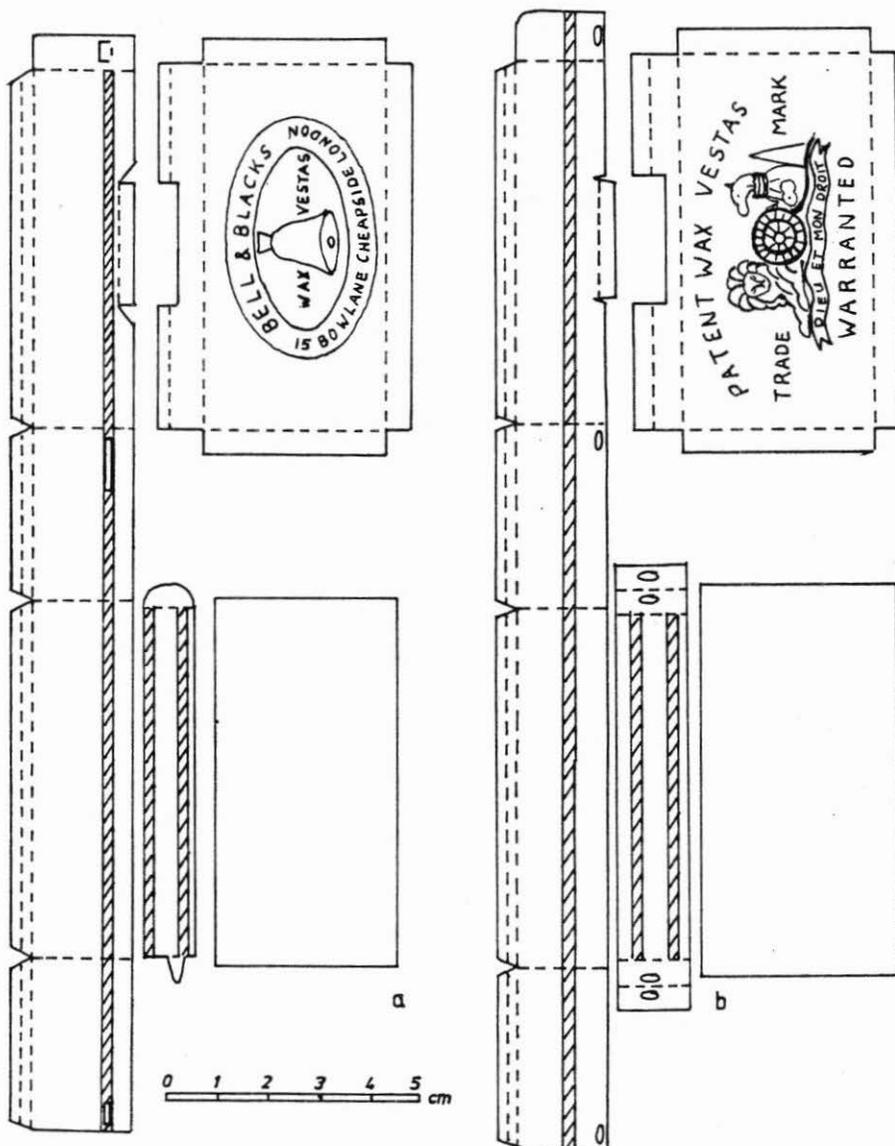


FIGURE 3. Matchboxes: a. Bell and Blacks; b. Warranted - shield.

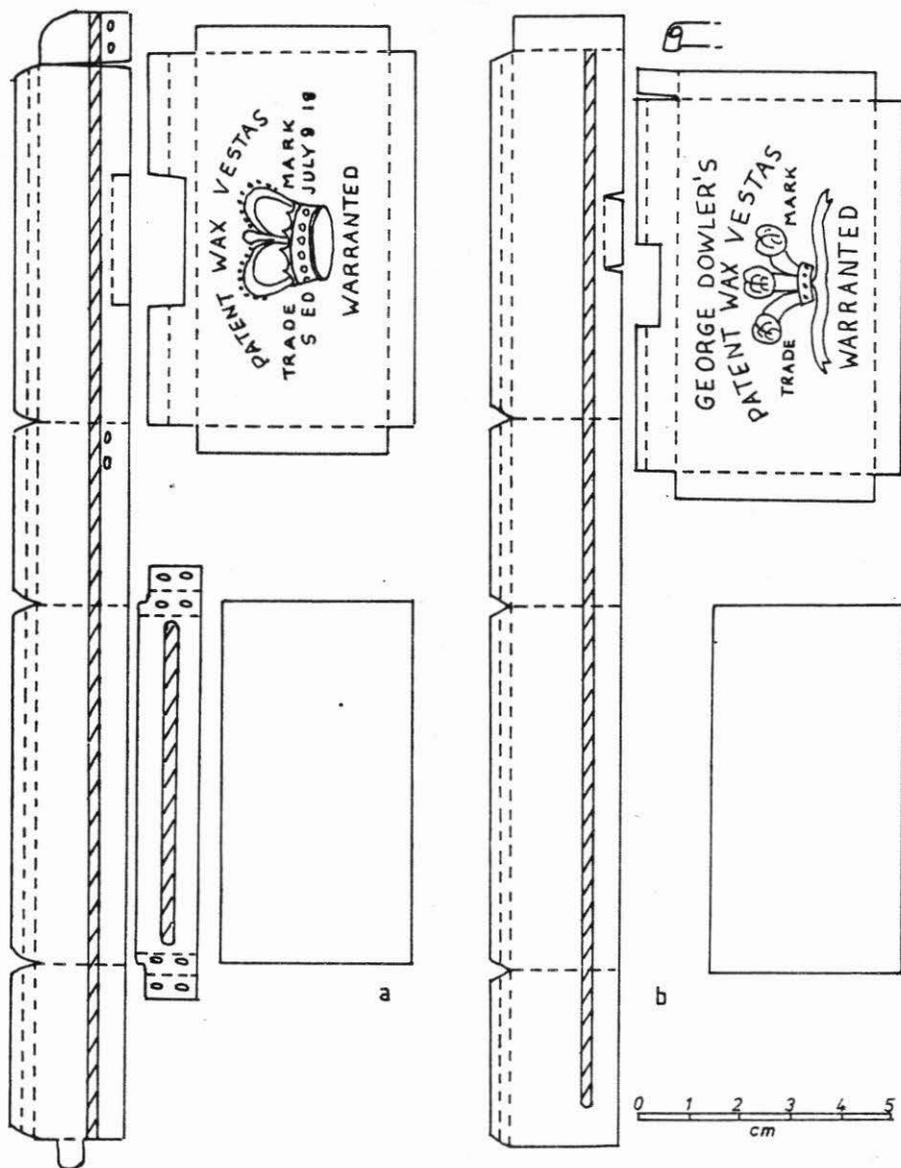


FIGURE 4. Matchboxes: a. Warranted - crown; b. George Dowler's.

and Black boxes from Omata (occupied 1860 to 1866) and Warea (1865 to 1868) are all variations of the above lid pattern (Prickett, 1981:486 and 558). The two from Fort Galatea are similar to each other, but the 1887 box is slightly wider and deeper and has a hole with a raised rim in the top right hand corner.

A box from a surface collection at Opepe Armed Constabulary Stockade (1870 to 1886) is embossed "Bell & Black (no 's') Trade Mark London". Two boxes from an Auckland private collection have 'all in one' bases and different closures: one has a grey sandy compound applied to one end and the other has black sand on the base. These both have "R. Bell & Co Estbd 1832 New Zealand No 4" on the lids, and are in such good condition that they are probably much more recent.

Patent Wax Vestas Trade Mark Warranted shield with lion and unicorn (Fig. 3b). These boxes have been painted black over silvered and lacquered metal, and on the whole have survived well.

Patent Wax Vestas Trade Mark Warranted Crown (Fig. 4a). (Also, very difficult to read "Established (?) July 9 18??"). The condition of these is very poor.

George Dowler's Patent Wax Vestas Trade Mark Warranted Prince of Wales feathers (Fig. 4b). These boxes were in extremely poor condition.

The three varieties of "Warranted" box were found in the Armed Constabulary sites, that is, the two whare and the ditch (filled in 1875), and in the 1875 pit (abandoned in 1876). The Dowler's box was illustrated from Warea (Prickett, 1981:558).

All in one base (Fig. 5a). The only example found of this variety was in such poor condition that it was not possible to discover its brand.

Superior Belgian Mars Wax Vestas No 4 (Fig. 5c). Both this box and the unillustrated round "Bryant and May" box had a knobbled striking surface on the base. Because of missing parts and poor condition it was impossible to draw them with any degree of accuracy.

Bryant & May Wax Vestas London (Fig. 5d). Only the lid survived from this box and it was identified on the basis of a few legible letters.

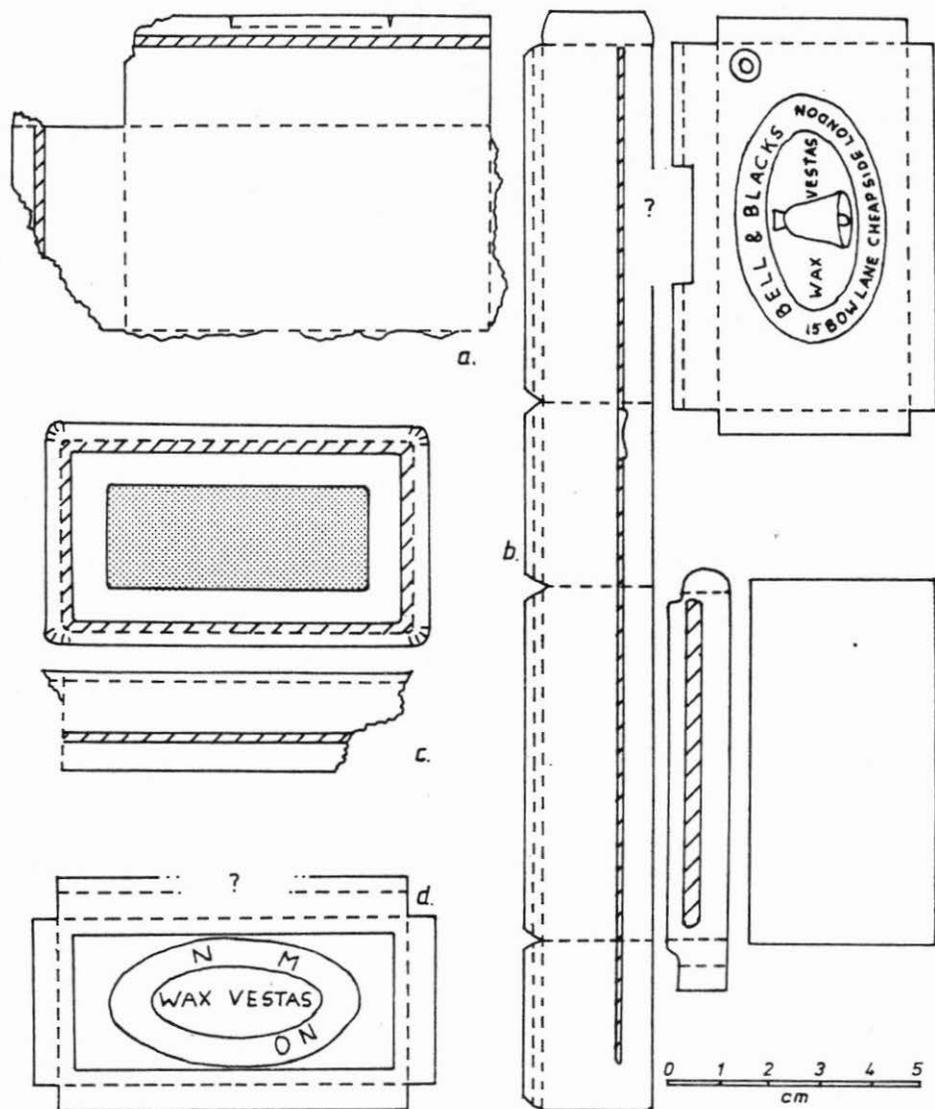


FIGURE 5. Matchboxes: a. all in one base; b. Bell and Blacks variety; c. Belgian Mars; d. Bryant and May.

Conclusions

Historical archaeology in New Zealand has now reached the point at which there is need for the identification of artefacts useful as chronological markers. Matchboxes may be very suitable. Firstly they are highly variable in terms of design and decoration. In the collection reported here there are 61 specimens representing nine different varieties. Secondly, the origin of these types in terms of where they were made and over what period, may be able to be established from existing records in the United Kingdom.

The samples of matchboxes described above was discarded in the short interval between 1876 and 1887. It can be used for comparative purposes given this chronological control, in analysing other collections and may aid attempts to date historic sites and the materials they contain.

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