



NEW ZEALAND  
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**NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER**



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knives and flakes, and the moa bone from the oven suggest an inland Archaic site at which the eating and probably the hunting of one of the smaller moas was carried out. If so, the site assumes considerable importance, and for this reason will receive further attention by members from the Society over the May holidays.

## A FISHING CAMP SITE NEAR RAGLAN

By C.G.Hunt

Hearing from a Raglan member that earth-moving equipment was uncovering numerous middens on a site (NZMS 1: Sheet N64 (Raglan) 392445 N25) near the local District High School, a party from Hamilton immediately journeyed to the district to investigate. It was found that a low point of land jutting out into the Raglan Harbour was being cleared and levelled to form a playing area for the High School. The scrub had been cleared and burnt while earth-moving equipment had already scraped off the surface soil and stacked it in heaps ready for re-spreading after the site had been levelled.

Shell middens were located on a number of slopes in the area and, after a surface survey, it was decided to concentrate on the largest, which was about 40 yards long and covered a slope about 25 feet high. There was no sign of defence works. The earth-movers working on the site stated that they had not found anything interesting apart from the middens and they very kindly agreed to work away from the excavations for the rest of the day.

As the site was to be destroyed in the near future there was little object in laying out the area in grids so the diggers immediately set to work on the midden. It was soon revealed that this was composed mostly of shells, with some bones. At the base of the slope the material was about 5 feet deep. The quantity and variety of shells visible suggested that this would be a good opportunity for obtaining information about the occupants' food supplies. So, in addition to

looking for artefacts, each member of the digging party of sixteen was instructed to collect a specimen of each type of shell found and to note whether that particular variety was in large, small or medium quantities. At the end of the day that information was collated and provided some useful facts.

Success with the discovery of artefacts came early in the form of a quartz drill point, which was found soon after digging commenced. This was the only artefact found before the morning tea break. By lunch, the only additional find was a chipped stone adze (toki) which was located near the spot where the drill point had been uncovered earlier. After lunch luck improved and, in quick succession, another stone adze and two stone chisels (whao) were found in the same area as the finds of the morning. These finds suggested that a workshop might have been located in the area of the western end of the midden, so the entire digging team was concentrated on that area. More artefacts were soon found and, by the end of the day, the party had recovered four stone sinkers (mahe), four stone adzes, two stone chisels, two quartz drill points, one stone pigment pot, one stone hammer (paqi), one sandstone grindstone (hoanga), some pumice abraders and numerous stone workshop chips. Among these workshop chips were only two small pieces of obsidian, which was unusual, as the local inhabitants had a plentiful source of supply as evidenced by the very large number of such chips found at various times on sites in the Raglan area. A few pieces of brightly patterned china found near the surface were indications that the inhabitants of the site had been there after the coming of Europeans, while the finding of a pig's tusk, also near the surface, was evidence of their changing food supplies. While the above finds were interesting and informative they were insignificant when compared with the information gained from the study of the shells represented in the midden.

It had long been suspected by some of those present that the former inhabitants of New Zealand were not fond of two varieties of paua, known scientifically as Haliotis. We know that the common paua (Haliotis iris) was eaten in large quantities and the shells used for ornamentation, but the other two varieties of Haliotis do not seem to have been favoured as a delicacy. It should be noted that these latter varieties of Haliotis were not called paua by the Maori but hihiwa for the Haliotis australis; and mehewa for the Haliotis virginea. From our observation on this particular site the common paua was present in moderate quantities but it outnumbered the hihiwa by about ten to one. No specimens of the mehewa were located at all, though we know that all three varieties are to be found on rocky foreshores in the vicinity of Raglan Harbour. Another interesting fact revealed by our study of the contents of this midden was that the former inhabitants

were apparently not fond of Queen Scallops (Pecten novaezealandiae) as a foodstuff. Both these scallops and the Stewart Island oysters (Ostrea sinuata) are to be found in moderate quantities in the Raglan Harbour at the present time. But, though the party found Stewart Island oysters in the midden in large quantities, only three pieces of Queen Scallop shell were located, and one of these had a hole drilled through it which suggested that it might have been an ornament or even merely strung on a piece of flax to scare birds off a seed bed. As expected, shellfish such as tuangi (Chione), mud snail (Amphibola crenata), and pipi (Amphidesma australe), which are plentiful in the area, were found in countless thousands. Other common varieties such as tuatua (Amphidesma subtriangulatum) and purple cockles (Veneracardia purpurata) were found in moderate quantities whereas there were only small numbers of oyster borers (Lepsiella scobina). Altogether nineteen varieties of shellfish were represented in the midden ranging from thousands of some varieties to a solitary specimen of the Southern Olive (Baryspira australis). Several members of the party noted that there were layers and patches of immature shells in the midden. It is well known that the Maori used to take steps to conserve their food supplies, but here was evidence that large quantities of shellfish had been consumed before they had grown to maturity. Two possible explanations that suggest themselves are that either these layers coincided with a period when the food supplies of the inhabitants had been depleted by a raiding party or that they coincided with periods when the vegetable crops had failed. Some of these shells were so small that it must have taken a large quantity to feed even one person, and it is unlikely that the former inhabitants would have collected them unless they had been driven to extreme hunger. Scattered through the midden were fair quantities of bird and fish bones, but the shellfish predominated.

All the artefacts and midden material collected from the site have been mounted on trays, carefully labelled and made available for use in schools. Already a number of schools have made use of the display and there are others who will get them in turn. The display has also been exhibited at the Demonstration of Science and Technology staged by the Waikato Branch of the Royal Society last May.