



NEW ZEALAND  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
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**NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER**



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A RADIOCARBON DATE FROM MT. WELLINGTON

by J. Golsom

A progress report on excavations at this site appeared in the last Auckland issue of the Newsletter, Vol. 3, no. 2 (1960), pp. 31-34. When that issue went to press, work was still under way, but had to be abandoned after Queen's Birthday Weekend when the bulldozers excavating for the reservoir finally moved in.

The terminal stages of investigation at the site concerned:

- (1) the nature of the occupation on the lower flat overlooking the northern slope of the volcano;
- (2) the sequence of events where the upper flat met the crater side.

The final event was the holding of a weekend school on the site at Queen's Birthday Weekend to demonstrate methods of archaeological surveying, photography and the drawing of plans and sections.

Through the good offices of the National Historic Places Trust, which had financed the excavations from the outset, a charcoal sample was submitted for radiocarbon dating at the Institute of Nuclear Sciences Lower Hutt. The sample was collected from a layer of shell and scoria lying just above the old ground surface at the top of the crater slope. The layer predates the artificial building up of the upper flat, the pits dug on it; and the construction of the scoria faced scarp which defined the margin of the upper flat above the crater (see page 33 of the 1960 Auckland Newsletter). Though the dated layer is not directly linked with any of the defensive features, it is difficult to conceive of any circumstances other than defence under which the crater rim of the mountain would have been occupied.

The date announced, 1430 A.D.  $\pm$  40, is consequently of considerable interest. The first non-traditional date for the occupation of the volcanic cones of the Auckland area, it falls well within the period of Archaic occupation on the nearby island of Motutapu (1200 A.D. to 1675 A.D.) and surprisingly close to the date of Archaic sites at Mercury Bay (earlier 14th century) with their abundant associated extinct bird fauna (especially moa). Unfortunately no artefactual finds were made during the Mt. Wellington excavations that would enable us to be definite on the attribution to Archaic or Classic Maori of the occupation there.

- (3) Davis F.W. 1958 "Petroglyphs in the Kaingaroa Block" Whakatane and District Historical Society. Historical Review. Vol.6. No.1 p.17-29.
- (4) Gifford W.H. and Williams, H. Bradney, 1940. A Centennial History of Tauranga, 112.

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