



NEW ZEALAND  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION

**NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER**



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operations.

This brief outline stresses the inadequate nature of the party's work but a return visit in November, 1959 will enable further and more detailed work to be done. It is hoped to locate further sites and make a re-examination of all these listed here.

A SUMMARY OF FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY FROM THE DOMINION MUSEUM GROUP

BY S. DAVIS.

Illus. Plates 2 and 3.

Work on the recording of sites in the Wellington District has been going on regularly since the beginning of 1959. All work has been done in the week-ends, and on nearly every Saturday or Sunday a small party has been slowly working its way around part of the bleak Wellington coastline, having recorded by September some 35 sites. The Group numbers about a dozen people, who have worked with great enthusiasm, concentrating its recording on the area around the Porirua Harbour.

Fortunately many of the sites in this district have been described in various periodicals. Much of Wellington and the neighbouring coastline has been well documented by Elsdon Best in a series of papers and maps, and we have located many of our sites through consultation with his literature. One notable paper, "Porirua and They Who Settled It", gives a yard by yard account of one side of the Porirua Harbour, and has been of inestimable value in locating sites, from the ubiquitous midden to the pa.

Sites recorded this year include pa sites, terraced hill sites, middens, isolated pits, and a burial area.

PA SITES. Pa sites are not numerous in the Porirua district, and today there is little evidence of fortified areas. Best has suggested that the natives took refuge in the bush when attacked, and this may be a possible explanation of the few pa, together with the difficulty of cutting fortifications in the hard Wellington rock.

The first large site recorded this year, in January, was the pa site at Makara (N.160/1) some miles south from the Porirua Harbour. It is a headland pa in an excellent state of preservation. A sketch plan of it is reproduced elsewhere in this issue and illustrates the transverse ditch which, with the steep scarp, forms the main defence of the stronghold. The terraces and line of small deep pits that run parallel to the ditch are shown.

Another pa recorded was the small headland pa north of Titahi Bay, known, according to Best, as Te-Pa-o-Kapo (N.160/25). It is now much eroded, but a transverse ditch across the neck of land that joins the pa to the mainland is still in evidence, with a steep bank some 6' high. The area within the pa is small, measuring some 88' x 94', with only one clearly defined terrace. Covered with scrub today, this small pa shows no sign of pits or further terracing.

A historic pa site, not yet recorded, lies under the English Church at Pauatahanui, at the head of the eastern arm of the Porirua Harbour. It was built by Te Rangihacata in 1846, but is now almost totally destroyed. Investigation by the Group showed that only a few shallow trenches now exist, in the field behind the church.

VILLAGE SITES. Terraced hill sites, which are possibly village sites, are numerous around the Porirua Harbour, and several on the western arm of the harbour have been recorded. They are mostly similar in type, situated a few feet above sea level, on the gently sloping spurs that surround the harbour. Most of them consist of several terraces running transversely across the spur, with occasional small platforms and semi-circular terraces on the steeper slopes. In two cases, well defined pits are present on the terraces. One site, (N.160/20) has two well preserved pits with raised rims, each on a different terrace. In several cases middens have been found high on the terraces, often spilling down the side of the spur. All the terraced sites recorded around Porirua command excellent views over the harbour. They show no evidence today of defensive earthworks, although it is quite possible that palisading might have been used.

Also on the western arm of the harbour we recorded a series of much weathered pits (N.160/19), appearing as shallow depressions on a grassy flat just north of the village site of Te Neke. The

position would be ideal for settlement, or for cultivations, as it is sheltered from the cold southerlies.

A small terraced site (N.160/15), was recorded on the southern shore of the eastern arm of the harbour. It consisted of three well defined terraces on the sheltered side of a gully, and a further terrace associated with a large pit cut into the side of the hill. Midden material was found spilling down the hill some 30' above sea level.

Unrecorded as yet, a complicated pattern of shallow terraces exists around the slopes of Mt. Cooper, at the entrance to the Porirua Harbour. They seem to be part of an extensive area of cultivation, probably attached to the villages on the shores of the harbour.

ISOLATED PITS. - Isolated pits seem to occur occasionally in this district, a rectangular pit being recorded below Mt. Cooper, measuring 27' x 11' cut into the base of the hill where it reached the beach. A feature of this pit (N.160/21) was the marked raised rim on the seaward side. Also, on the steep ridge of hills running north from Ohariu Bay, just past Smith's Bay, two pits, which appeared as rectangular depressions were recorded (N.160/4). They commanded excellent views south to Makara Pa and the Marlborough Sounds, and north to Mana Island. Lack of time on this particular expedition prevented investigation of reported terraces close by, so it is possible that these pits may be part of a more complex site.

MIDDENS. - Looking back over the files of site record forms, one can see that the Group has recorded more middens than any other type of site. Middens are particularly numerous around the Porirua Harbour, and the shell fish that make up most of the middens must have been easily obtainable from the mudflats and rocks. Within the middens varieties of shell have been found, but rarely much bone. The shell most frequently found in middens is the Tuangi (Chione stutchburyi), whilst the Pipi (Amphidesma australe) is also found in large quantities. In the shallow eastern arm of the harbour the Titiko or Mud Snail (Amphibola crenata) are found in great numbers, and are well represented in the middens there; whilst shells such as the Paua (Haliotis iris) and the Atata (Lunella smaragda) are found on the rocks on the western arm of the harbour and appear also in middens there.

The Group attempts to analyse the contents of shell middens in the field, although any difficult identifications are willingly done by the Museum Staff. We have found that our lists of shells from middens appear meagre by comparison with the lists published by Elsdon Best, and can only conclude that much more of the middens must have been visible in his day, or that he excavated for his material.

We have records of five middens on the western arm of the harbour, most of them being close to the beach under the terraced hillsides. The eastern arm shows a much greater concentration of midden material, with two large middens recorded on the southern shore, and twelve on the north-eastern shore. One can almost trace a continuous line of shells from the Horokivi Valley to the Kahao Stream. These middens are all exposed in the road cuttings, and in several cases are up to 60' in length. One group of four middens supplies an almost continuous line of midden material for over 200'. This concentration is on the beach below what Best records as being the "Earthworks Pa", but which now appears to be covered by the ruin of an Army car park.

Further middens have been investigated at Paekakariki, where two great heaps of Pipi (Amphidesma australe) were mapped. Middens have been visited in the Waikanae area, which is noted for the vast heaps of midden material still exposed on the sandhills behind the beach. Several of these middens have recently been recorded and are of particular interest, as they are the only middens so far that have yielded artefacts on the surface, a small flaked chisel and a large flaked knife being picked up there in 1958.

Middens have also been recorded at Owhariu Bay, and at Smith's Bay.

BURIAL AREA. - A record has been made of an interesting group of stone mounds in Palliser Bay (N.168, 169/1. They were scattered over a boulder strewn beach at the mouth of one of the larger rivers in the Bay. Excavations by Dr. T.T. Barrow in 1958 yielded a crouch burial from underneath one mound. When recording during Easter, 1959, the largest remaining mound measured 23' x 13'.

PAREMATA FORT. - The crumbling ruins of the old fort at Paremata, built between 1846-47 at the order of Sir George Grey, attracted the attention of the Group one winter afternoon. Following

consultations with the National Historic Places Trust, and the Ngati-Toa Domain Board, the Group were given a small grant and asked to clear the ruins so that they could be turfed and a commemorative plaque erected. There has been a lot of work involved in this project, and as yet it is only half completed, for we have had to move tons of the beach boulders that were part of the original construction. The local inhabitants think that we are building a motor camp (there is one planned for that area) but within a few weeks we should be able to confound them with a carefully cleared site.

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A vast amount of recording remains to be done in the Wellington district, but a good start has been made this year. We are fortunate to have had during the year the expert advice available at the Dominion Museum, where the Conchology, Ichthyology, and Vertebrate Zoology Departments have been most helpful in identifying material collected during recording. We have also had much help from local landowners and enthusiasts, who have led us to sites, as well as contributing material to the Museum collections.

The maps that illustrate this article were drawn by Miss W. Mumford. The Photographs are by Mr. Frank O'Leary.

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#### WORK IN THE WAIRARAPA. by K. Cairns.

"The History of the Wairarapa Maoris" is steadily being recorded. After gathering references for some years, the field checking of sites is progressing well, and during the year much of the coastline has been covered. Expeditions with local enthusiasts have been most successful, and their knowledge of important sites most useful.

Furthermore local collections have been examined and recorded, and every endeavour has been made to secure the exact locality of artefacts recorded. It is hoped ultimately to cover the area from Palliser Bay north to the Manawatu River, and although the programme is ambitious, progress to date is encouraging. A number of inland settlement areas have been



LOOKING NORTH TO MAKARA PA



DITCH AND SCARP AT MAKARA PA

ART.S.DAVIS

