



NEW ZEALAND
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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AN UNUSUAL ARTEFACT FROM OPITO

Bob Jolly
Papakura

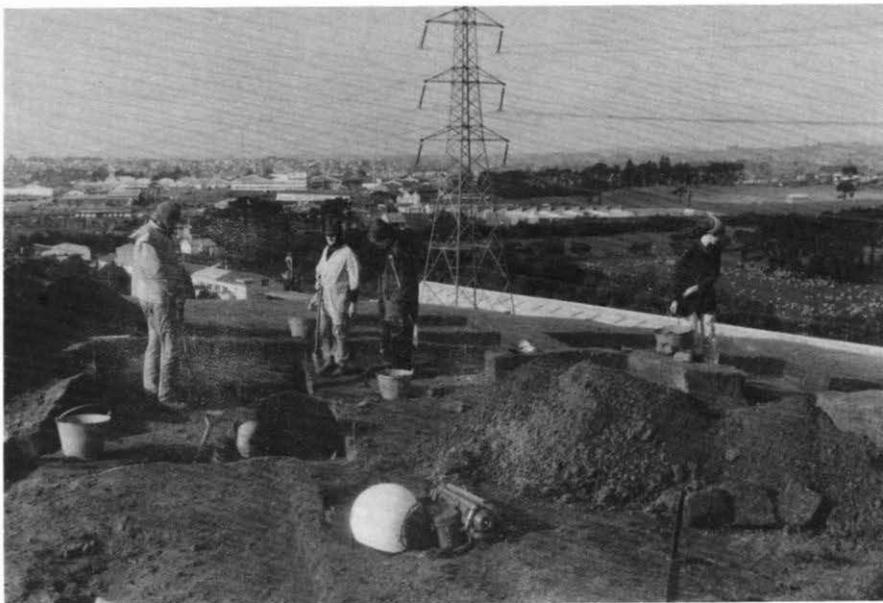
Almost anywhere along Mahinapua Bay and Opito Bay, and in the areas behind them, there is evidence of Polynesian activity, both archaic and later. Some four streams run into the beach. Two, Chapman's and Calder's, are never dry. Calder's contains hot springs.

After attending Skipper's hangi in, I think, 1958, Mr and Mrs Fred Butler and a lady guest of theirs, with the writer, waded across Calder's - no bridge in those days - and arrived at the edge of the dune to the left of the present road. We noticed some flakes and bone fragments and decided to discover whether there was a culture layer behind the debris.

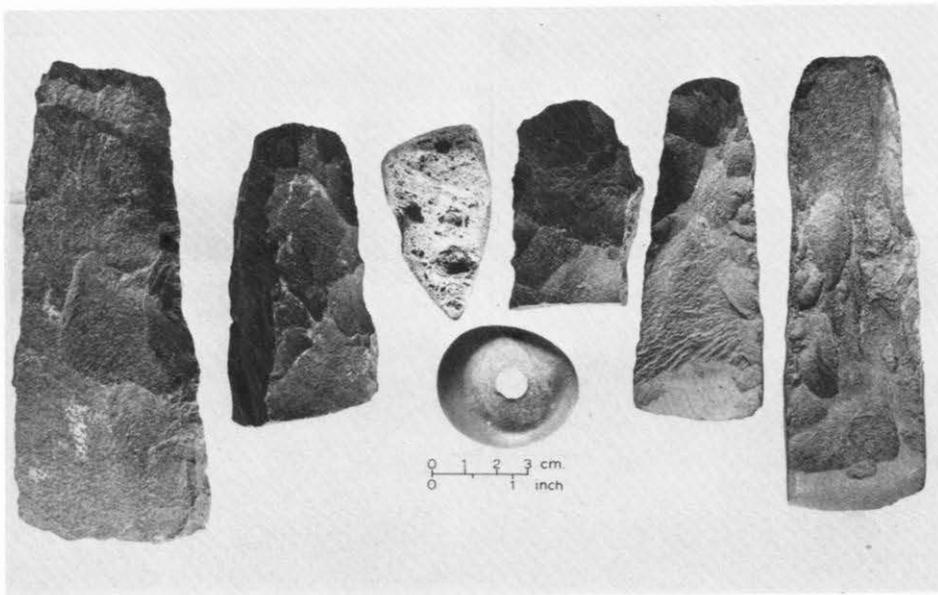
It was not long before we uncovered the assemblage in the photograph (Plate 1). The pieces are in the Auckland Museum (accession numbers AR 60-64). I have never ceased to be puzzled by the amulet or whatever it is (AR 63). The top level authorities refuse to pass an opinion on it, so I am hoping that some of the readers of this journal, amateur or academic, will venture to do so. It is made from a yellow chert pebble, and has in my opinion been worked from both sides. There is a similar object in the Hamilton museum, although that is very much larger, about eight inches across.

The area has no site number. Garry Law's excavation is about thirty metres to the south of it. I have been told that a good deal of skeletal material had been uncovered to the west of the road, but it is not possible to investigate as much is now occupied by housing.

The grid reference is 295767, and the layer was about 1.5 m above sea level. The whole area is part of the mighty Tahanga complex, and was occupied, I am sure, from early until fairly recent times.



AUCKLAND ARCHAEOLOGY Plate 3. Hamlins Hill excavations, 1976.



OPITO ARTEFACT Plate 1. Assemblage including worked chert pebble.