



NEW ZEALAND  
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**NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER**



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ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES OF MATAWHAHAWHOU

POINT, GREAT BARRIER ISLAND

David Butts  
Manawatu Museum  
Palmerston North

During January and February, 1978, David Butts and Roger Fyfe undertook one month's site surveying on Great Barrier Island (Butts and Fyfe n.d.). During that period 118 sites were located on the coastal strip from Kaitoke Creek south to Cape Barrier and around to Tryphena Harbour. Two special one day survey investigations were also made outside this survey area. The second of these was to 'Smith's Bay', at the request of the major land owner in the Bay, Mr. Burt Smith. It was their concern for a burial eroding from a small islet off Matawhawhau Point that lead to their contacting us and our subsequent visit to the area.

As can be seen from Figure 1, Matawhawhau Point is on the southwestern coast of Great Barrier Island. Geologically this area consists of late Miocene, early Pliocene site flows and fragmentals. On the mainland itself the only site we managed to locate was a series of 3 rectangular pits on the ridge leading out to Matawhawhau Point (N35-36/239). Obsidian was also found on the beach. It is possible to gain access to the islet on foot when the tide is low.

The islet partially covered with clumps of Phormium tenax, tussock and grass, is a complex archaeological site (N35-36/238). On the northern and eastern sides of the islet stone walling has been erected for what appears to be retaining or protective purposes. In support of this conclusion the following reasoning may be offered. The stone walling forms a retaining wall against the bank of the lower terrace on the northern and eastern sides of the island not only holding the bank stable but protecting it from the waves during high swells. It appears that the area behind the stone walling may have been filled after construction of the walls. The stone walling is not free standing. The short time spent examining the point precluded any mapping of the stone walling and other features. The stone walling varied in height from circa. 40cm up to circa. 180cm. The walls are constructed of beach boulders of varying sizes. Behind the stone walling in many places there is visible a range of midden materials (paua, tuatua, mussel, fish bone, rat bone) mixed with a large component of soil. At the eastern end of the islet a burial is eroding from this matrix of midden and soil. The eroded material (recovered by the Smith family) to date, includes a pelvis, a pubis, 2 distal tibia, a sacrum, the proximal end of a femur, and the distal end of a fibula. At the time of our exam-

ination of the site further bones were protruding from the section. The material is being eroded from the site in exceptionally high waters and it appears that the stone walling which may have once protected this part of the site is in danger of further destruction. As far as the author is aware the site on Matawhawhau Point is unique on Great Barrier Island.

Reference

Butts, D.J. and R. Fyfe n.d. Report on the Kaitoke - Tryphena Harbour Archaeological site survey, Great Barrier Island.

For the N.Z.H.P.T. 1978

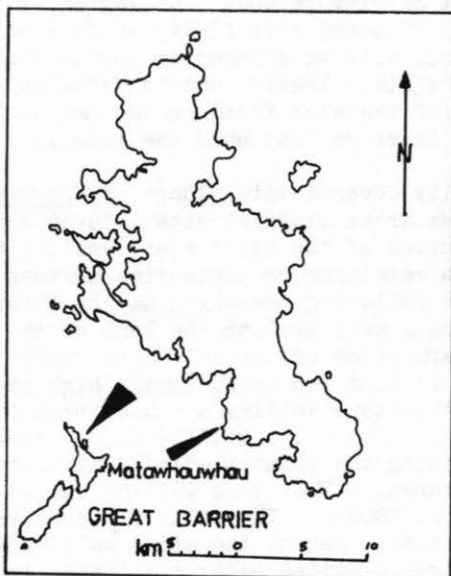


FIG. 1 LOCATION MAP



GREAT BARRIER. Stone wall on the eastern end of the Matawhawhau Point.



NEW PLYMOUTH FLOUR MILLS Plate 1. The Alpha Mill.