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## ARCHAEOLOGY IN NEW ZEALAND



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# ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT 1–15 PIPITEA STREET, WELLINGTON

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CFG HERITAGE LTD

The sections at 1–15 Pipitea Street, Wellington, were part of the original town acre grants created by the New Zealand Company in 1840. Pipitea Street is located in an area that was central to early Wellington and close to Pipitea pā, actually a fenced kāinga, which was inhabited by Māori in the late 1830s and 1840s. The site is situated above a low sea cliff while the core of the pā was on the coastal flat below and to the north of Pipitea Street. The contact period Māori history and archaeology of 1–15 Pipitea Street has been reported on previously (Campbell 2009). In 1863 John Elisha Smith built a house on 3 Pipitea Street and it was this household that was the focus of an archaeological investigation. Other houses were built on 5/7 Pipitea Street around 1862, 11–15 Pipitea Street in 1881, 5 Pipitea Street in 1896 and 9 Pipitea Street in 1936.

The properties at 1–15 Pipitea Street were on land being developed by the Pipitea Street Trust for an office block. Archaeological investigations were undertaken by CFG Heritage Ltd from 28 May to 28 June 2008.

## **Standing buildings**

Four 19th century houses, 5, 11, 13 and 15 Pipitea Street, and one 1930s house, 9 Pipitea Street, remained standing on the site until just prior to the archaeological excavations. The 19th century buildings were recorded before being relocated off site, while the Art Deco house built in 1936 was demolished.

The houses on 11, 13, and 15 Pipitea Street were all built in 1881 for Henry Barber, while 5 Pipitea Street was built later, in 1896, by James Ames. All four houses were two-storey, timber-framed buildings with weatherboard cladding and corrugated iron roofing. Measured floor plans and elevations were drawn of each house, with annotations to note later additions and changes.

## Archaeological investigation

The area investigated included sections 1, 5, 7, 11, 13, and 15 Pipitea Street, which fronted onto the street, and sections 3 and 9, which were at the rear of the site (Figure 1). Areas are referred to by street address, rather than by town acre or lot number.

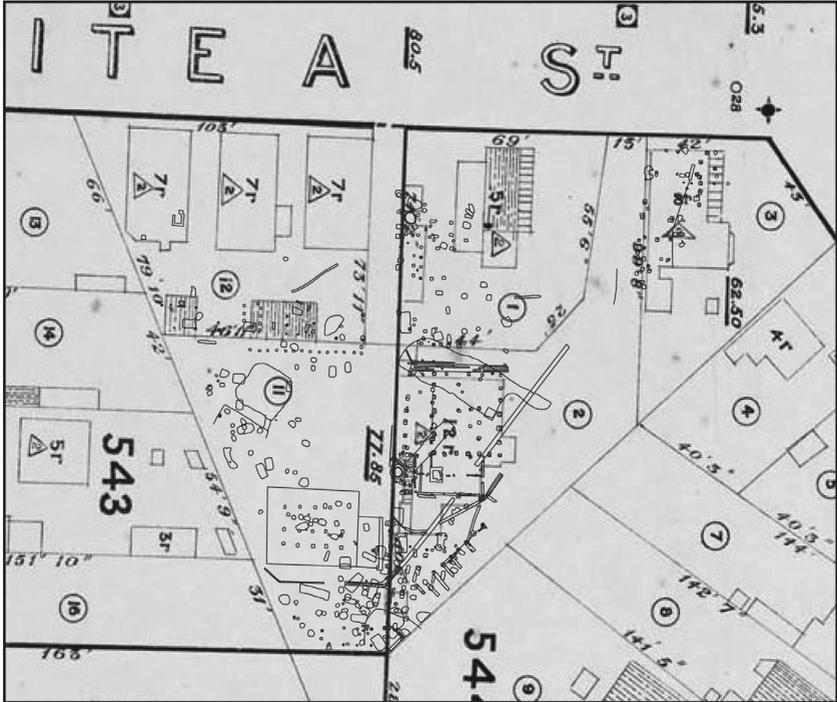


Figure 1. Plan of features at 1–15 Pipitea Street, overlain on the 1891 Ward map.

### 1 Pipitea Street

The first occupier of 1 Pipitea Street was likely Salvatore Cemino who bought the property in 1875. Cemino's house was demolished in the 1970s as part of the sea cliff on which it stood was cut away to construct a substation

below. Excavation revealed part of the western foundations of the house still in situ – the eastern part was cut away with the bank.

### 3 Pipitea Street

This was the property of John Elisha Smith who is recorded in the rating books of 1863 as having a dwelling on it. By the mid 20th century the house had become the Reardon Guest House and it was later demolished in the 1960s.

#### Area 3 House

The archaeological excavation revealed three phases of house construction (Figure 2).

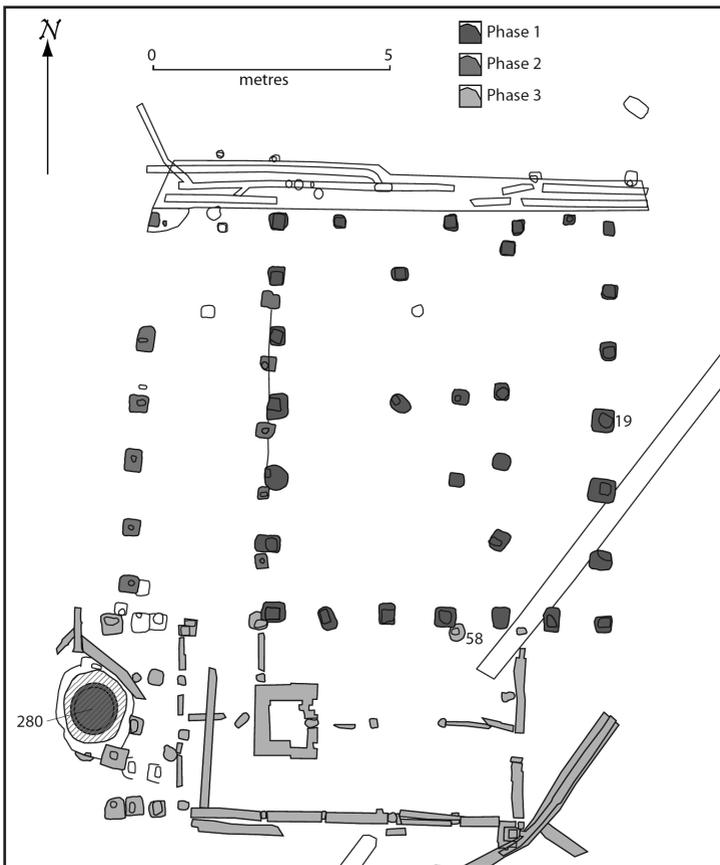


Figure 2. Phases of house construction at 3 Pipitea Street.

The extensions (Phases 2 and 3) matched the plan of 3 Pipitea Street in the 1892 Ward map closely and so must have been added before this date. Phase 1 was clearly outlined by a square (7 x 8.3 m) of heavy foundations, with postholes generally 450 x 450 mm containing tōtara piles 300 x 300 mm (12 x 12 feet). 3.5 m southwest of this structure was a brick-lined well 1 m (3 feet) wide. The well had been capped with concrete and when this was removed a 13.5 m deep structure was revealed. The next phase of the house was a 3 x 8.3 m wide extension to the west marked by postholes generally 350 x 350 mm, with posts 180 x 130 mm. The final phase was a 4 x 7.2 m extension on the south end of the house, which had a brick wall outer foundation and wooden internal piles. All phases showed levelling of the ground surface before construction.

### Area 3 Rear and Area 9 Rear

It is clear that the occupants of 3 Pipitea Street used the backyard of 9 Pipitea Street, a vacant lot up until 1936, for rubbish pits. John Smith had a lease on both properties up to at least 1900 and gardened 9 Pipitea Street. The material culture from the pits indicates that most relate to the period of Smith's occupancy and so the two areas are discussed together (Figure 3).

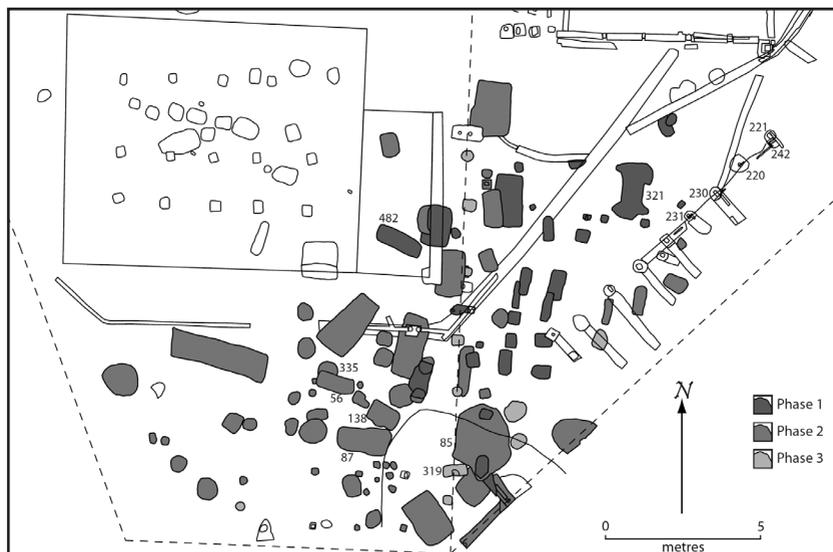


Figure 3. Phasing of features on Area 3/9 Rear.

### Phase 1

Once the overlying fill had been removed, the partial remains of an earlier structure were revealed along with several postholes and pits. Two rows of features formed rough parallel alignments 600 mm apart, though they were not uniform or regularly spaced. The features appeared to be postholes with some having round post-moulds and some square post-moulds. The nature of the structure is not known. Three of the four rectangular pits were rubbish pits, while the other was shallow and contained only mixed, mottled fill.

### Phase 2

The great majority of features in Area 3/9 Rear were cut into the overlying fill. The fill had clearly been reworked in places, as Feature 462, which only showed up at the base of the fill, contained material dating c.1900–1910. Two pits, Features 85 and 87, were larger and deeper than any others and might have been longdrops. Feature 85 contained a large amount of domestic artefacts and measured 750 mm deep with a square base 900 x 800 mm. Feature 87 contained few artefacts and measured 1800 x 750 mm at the top and was 1200 mm deep. Other pits varied in size, with most seemingly having been dug specifically to dispose of rubbish. A series of seven postholes running parallel to the cliff edge formed a fence.

### Phase 3

At a much later date a fence was erected between the two yards, with a line of postholes excavated along the boundary. Three other features contained modern material, notably plastics.

### Area 3 Front

In front of 3 Pipitea Street was a trench containing three ceramic drains and a gas pipeline. Along the boundary with 5 and 7 Pipitea Street was part of a fenceline.

### *5 and 7 Pipitea Street*

The 1863 rating books indicate that Bishop Charles John Abraham, Bishop of the adjacent pro-Cathedral of St Paul's (now Old St Paul's), owned a house on 5 and/or 7 Pipitea Street. The area was truncated during the demolition of 7 Pipitea Street and the construction of the house on 5 Pipitea Street in 1896, indicating that demolition probably occurred before then. Few features were found which may relate to the earlier structure. One was a brick-lined well, similar to that on 3 Pipitea Street. The well had been filled in and partial

excavation revealed that the fill contained 19th century ceramics and glass, but also modern plastics.

The house built on 5 Pipitea Street in 1896, which was removed prior to archaeological investigation, had heavy concrete foundations. The area where the house had stood was not investigated.

### *9 Pipitea Street*

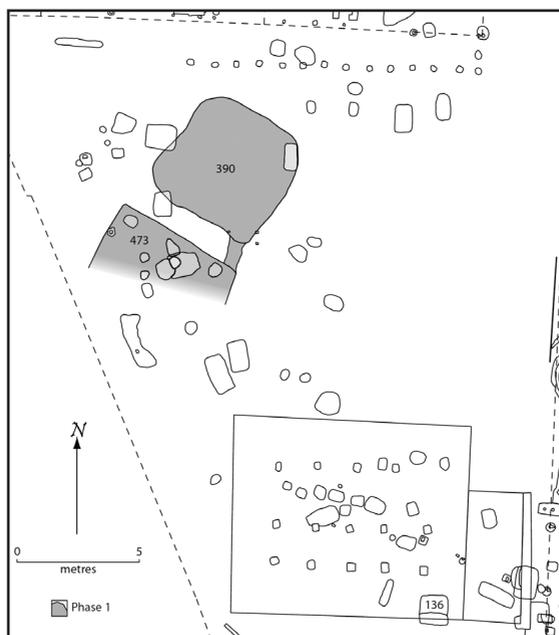
No house was built on 9 Pipitea Street until 1936 and this was demolished prior to archaeological investigation.

#### Area 9 House

Directly underneath the house were 14 rubbish pits. The contents suggest that most were deposited from the early 20th century until the house's construction.

#### Area 9 Front

There were several rubbish pits at the front of the section containing late 19th and early 20th century material (Figure 4).



*Figure 4. Area 9 House and Area 9 Front.*

These most likely relate to the 1881 houses on 11–15 Pipitea Street. A series of 15 postholes forming a fenceline 1.5 m inside 9 Pipitea Street at the back of these houses shows that legal boundaries were largely ignored.

Two large amorphous pits (Features 390 and 473) contained large amounts of material dating to around the 1860s and are probably the earliest features in this area. The range of material culture was different than that from the 3 Pipitea Street occupation and clearly predates the occupation of 11–15 Pipitea Street. The pits do not appear to have been dug as rubbish pits, but were used for this purpose when they were filled in.

### *11–15 Pipitea Street*

These three houses were built in 1881 for Henry Barber and were rented out for at least the remainder of the 19th century. The houses were removed prior to archaeological investigation. The footprint of the houses and the area immediately around them was not investigated.

At the back of each section were the remains of brick foundations. At 13 and 15 Pipitea Street these were rectangular brick pads 1400 x 930 mm, while behind 11 Pipitea Street bricks were arranged in a square with bare earth in the middle. These features would have been washhouse copper bases.

### *Pipitea redoubt*

While historic records indicated that Pipitea redoubt should have been located on these properties, probably along the sea cliff edge of 1 Pipitea Street, it was not discovered. Such a structure would have been unmissable archaeologically. Two explanations are possible: either it was destroyed when the sea cliff was cut away to construct the substation or it was not located on the properties investigated.

## **Material culture**

Of the total assemblage of material culture recovered around half directly relates to the occupation of 3 Pipitea Street by John Smith. The next largest sample relates to the large pit features in Area 9 Front. Only a very small proportion of the material relates to the occupation of 1, 5, and 7 Pipitea Street, or for the post-1881 occupation of 11, 13 and 15 Pipitea Street. The main artefact classes recovered were ceramics with an MNV of 1351 and glassware with an MNV of 1297.

Artefacts from features in Area 3/9 Rear date from the early 1860s and are mainly related to the occupation of John Smith. The same ceramic patterns and types of glassware were found across this area, indicating that Smith used the backyards of both sections to dispose of rubbish. The most common transfer printed pattern was Abbey, with a minimum of 42 items of tableware.

These were probably purchased as a set. The pattern is different to that of the same name produced by Livesley, Powell and Co., and to date has only been recovered from sites in Wellington. Rhine and Willow were the other main patterns represented.

Of particular interest amongst the artefacts were several items relating to children (Figure 5). Three children's plates, with one entitled 'Blindmans Buff' and another 'Ducks', were found, along with five children's mugs and a number of doll parts. These items date from the 1860s and it is possible that Smith and his wife already had children when they arrived at Pipitea Street.

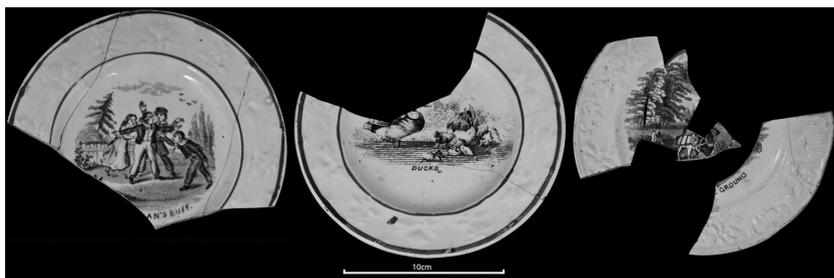


Figure 5. Children's plates: left, *Blindmans Buff*; middle, *Ducks*; right, *[Plough the] ground*.

Small rubbish features dating from after 1900 (the year John Smith died) indicate that the land use of sections 3 and 9 continued relatively unchanged, probably up until a house was built on 9 Pipitea Street in 1936.

In the rest of the area excavated the most notable assemblages of ceramics came from two large pit features in Area 9 Front (Features 390 and 473). Feature 390 was fully excavated, with an MNV for ceramics of 210 and glassware 282. Most of the artefacts from these pits was highly fragmented and concentrated in a layer at the base of the pits. The manufacturing dates for the ceramics and the glassware suggest that dumping of rubbish occurred over a relatively short period around the 1860s. There are no artefacts from these features securely dated to the 1850s or to the 1870s.

The contents of these two features differ markedly from the domestic rubbish pits associated with the household of John Smith. Of the glassware from Feature 390 alcohol accounts for 78.7 % (222 of 282). The proportion of alcohol to other products is more in line from what one would expect from a commercial establishment such as a hotel. At the Victoria Hotel site in Auckland, for example, alcohol made up 80% of glassware (Brassey and Macready 1994). Of the features relating to John Smith's occupancy, Feature 63 has the highest proportion of alcohol bottles at 65% (13 of 20), while most other features have

around 50% or less. The ceramics also differ with many of the transfer printed patterns being unique to these two pits. The rubbish from these pits clearly derives from a source other than occupation of 1 – 15 Pipitea Street.

At the back of 11 – 15 Pipitea Street the artefacts recovered post-dated the building of houses on these properties in 1881 and some dated well into the 20th century. This was also true of the underfloor deposits of these houses which were sampled prior to their removal.

Very few intact rubbish deposits were found in 1, 5 or 7 Pipitea Street, with the small sample of artefacts reflecting occupation from the 1860s through to the early 20th century.

### *Faunal remains*

Of the 66 secure contexts from which faunal remains were recovered, 44 were associated with the Smith family occupation of 3 Pipitea Street. Sheep bones were by far the most common followed by cattle. Pigs and poultry played only a minor subsistence role. Poultry included mostly chicken and duck, with small quantities of goose and turkey recovered from later features in Area 9/Front. Local wild resources including rabbit and shellfish were also eaten infrequently. No fish remains were recovered; however, it is possible this is a result of taphonomic processes rather than directly reflecting consumption patterns.

The taphonomy of sheep and cattle bones exhibited high rates of butchery and relatively low rates of non-cultural modification such as weathering and gnawing. Sheep bones in particular had been reduced by sawing or chopping to small retail cuts such as chops, especially the leg cuts which, with hind foot cuts, represented by far the most common sheep butchery cuts. Cut marks on femur shafts suggested the carving of roast mutton or lamb legs. For cattle, hind leg and short loin beef cuts were the most frequent while the butchering of these cuts indicates they were used as steaks and roasts.

The range of elements present indicates that most cuts were bought already butchered from specialised meat suppliers. With lamb, hogget and mutton, most of the sheep killed were less than 3.5 years old. For cattle the ages at time of death varied indicating that both cows and steers were being utilised. Almost all of the pigs killed were under 2 years old.

### **Discussion**

The Pipitea Street excavations largely concentrated on John Elisha Smith's house at 3 Pipitea Street, built in 1863 and demolished in the late 1960s, as this section was the least disturbed of those occupied during the 19th century.

Smith died in 1900, but the archaeology demonstrates a continuity of use and occupation into the 20th century.

Another thing the archaeology demonstrates, and which is also emphasised in the history, is that there was little respect for the legal boundaries of unused land. Smith had a lease on both 3 and 9 Pipitea Street, and while he built his house right up to the boundary with 9 Pipitea Street, this boundary was not fenced at this time. It was probably fenced when the 1936 house was built on 9 Pipitea Street. The use of the back of both sections was largely identical: there are numerous rubbish pits, all containing much the same material, dating from the beginning of the Smith family occupation.

John Smith, we know from the history, married Lilia McHardy in Wellington in 1858. From the archaeology and analysis of the material culture we know that John and Lilia had children, probably from the time they arrived at Pipitea Street. Two extensions to the house suggest a growing family. By the late 19th century the family would have been complete and it is likely that by the time of John Smith's death in 1900 that most or all of the children would already have left home.

During the occupation of 11–15 Pipitea Street the front of 9 Pipitea was used as a common dumping ground and the back boundary fence of 11 and 13 Pipitea Street, and probably 15 Pipitea Street (though we were unable to trace it that far), was actually built 1.5 m into the front of 9 Pipitea Street. These houses were built in 1881 and so the fence probably dates to this period. Prior to this Area 9 Front was used to dump rubbish that was almost certainly not from the Smith household. The contents of Feature 390 and 473 (Area 9 Front/1) were quite distinctive, though they are from a similar date as the features in Area 3/9 Rear. Someone other than Smith was using land on which he had a lease to dump quite large quantities of rubbish, but we do not know who. Bishop Charles John Abraham built a house at 5/7 Pipitea Street (a part of which we found, along with the well) and had a lease on 11–15 Pipitea Street where he paddocked horses. From the early 1870s this leasehold passed through several hands until Henry Barber built the houses in 1881.

Built on for European domestic use between 1860s and 1930s, this land has had a domestic purpose until recently when 19th century buildings were moved and 20th century buildings were demolished in preparation for a new office block. The land will now join much of the neighbouring property in serving a commercial purpose. Just as colonial European structures replaced Māori pā and occupation in the area, so now does modern business and commerce replace the early historic domestic use of the land. A few historic houses,

the Thistle Inn and Old St Paul's Cathedral remain as visible reminders of the early historic occupation of Thorndon.

### **Acknowledgements**

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### **References**

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