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ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT SCOTT HOUSE (R11/2358): INTERIM REPORT

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A standing historic house at Mangere, Auckland, was investigated in late 2007. The curtilage, defined by modern fences, was investigated in October, and after house demolition, the area under the house was excavated for artefacts and for features. The work, carried out by CFG Heritage, was commissioned by Auckland Airport Limited in advance of earthworks associated with construction of the northern runway. Archaeological investigations were required as a condition of authority 2007/323, issued by the Historic Places Trust under section 14 of the Historic Places Act 1993, and included buildings archaeology, excavation of features around the house and excavation of the underfloor area to recover artefacts.

The Scott house (Figures 1 and 2) is believed to have been built in the mid to late 1860s. John Scott purchased Allotment 87 and 88 in 1865 and his two sons, John and William, lived on the property (John Scott Snr farmed nearby in Mangere). From LINZ deeds, electoral rolls and Highway Board rates lists it can be deduced that the property was split between the two brothers according to allotment boundaries with houses built on each allotment: Allotment 87 was transferred to John Scott Jnr in 1882 and sold in 1895. In 1906 it was purchased by Matthew Kirkbride, part of a well-known family in the Ihumatao–Mangere area and retained by the family until the sale to Auckland Airport. The original house site on Allotment 88 is thought to have been on the northern side of Ihumatao Road but no structures survive.

Further research is being undertaken on the size and composition of John Scott's family which might have some relevance to the archaeology and development of the building in the same way that the Westney family history was used to interpret the archaeology of the Westney house (Campbell and Furey 2007).

Buildings Archaeology

Buildings archaeology revealed the sequence of construction of the house and changes and additions made over time. The house was originally a two-roomed cottage (Phase I) with a shell-floored lean-to on the south side. Soon after a room was added on the north side and a lean-to to the west (Phase II). A third addition (Phase III) was made to the house in the early 20th century when a further two rooms were added on the south side of the house. Phases I and II were roofed with shingles, still present under the roofing iron when the house was being prepared for demolition.

A series of internal changes took place within the house with some rooms being altered in size and evidence of blocked in doorways and windows behind scrim and wallpaper. These changes were described and planned and related to different phases of the house.



Figure 1. Scott House showing the north and west side prior to excavations starting. The main roofline in the centre is that of the original Phase I cottage and the room added on the north in Phase II. The lean-to is also Phase II. Wooden shingles were present under the roofing iron on these parts of the house. On the right, with the brick chimney, is the Phase III addition to the house.



Figure 2. The front of the house from the southeast corner. The Phase III addition is in the foreground. The verandah may be a later addition to the original cottage.

Samples of joists, top plates, roof rafters and studs were taken from Phases I and II for dendrochronology analysis, which will be undertaken by Gretel Boswijk of University of Auckland. Nail samples from different stages of the building were collected.

Archaeological Investigations

Once topsoil was removed around the house a series of ceramic drains were immediately visible leading to septic tanks. Glazed, collared ceramic drains overlay unglazed field tile drains, and metal pipes were also present through this area. Two shell paths lead from the west side of the house out to the western extent of the excavations. The northern of the two was close to, but not aligned with, the back door of the house and was thinner and more dispersed than the southern one. Both appeared to be early in the sequence of the house as they disappeared under the Phase II and III sections of the building. The plan of excavations around the house area is shown in Figure 3.

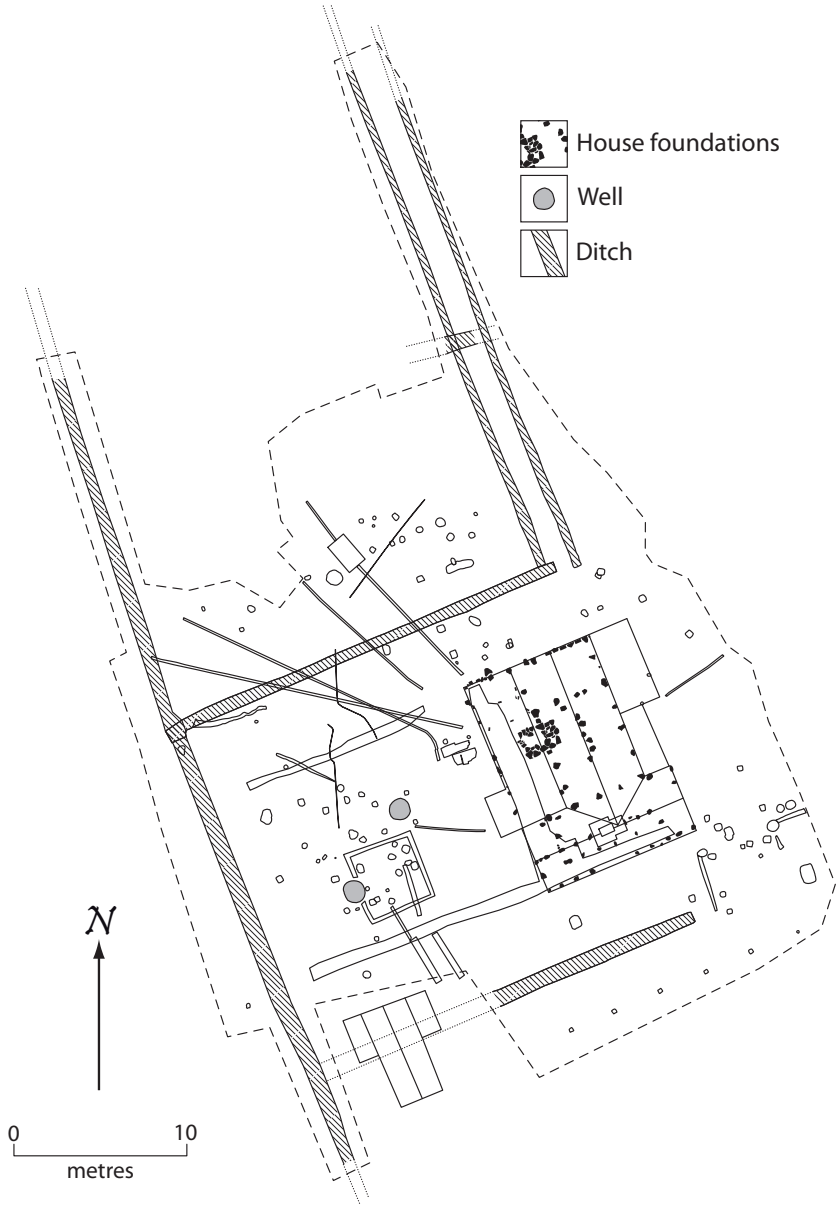


Figure 3. Features excavated in the yard of Scott House.

Shallow ditches were present on three sides of the house. These were most likely the remnants of ditch and bank fences which were commonly used by early settlers to create enclosures and to divide and demarcate land. Six trenches were uncovered. Three intersected to enclose the house and yard on north, west and south sides. The north and south (east–west running) trenches ended flush with the east side of the original cottage and were equidistant from the original portion of the house at their eastern ends, indicating that they were created during Phase I of the house development. They joined a longer north–south running trench that continued north beyond the yard, where it probably served to divide the land into paddocks. Intersecting ditches also created a small enclosure to the north of the house which may have been for a garden or a small animal enclosure.

Two brick-lined wells were present in the back yard near the kitchen. The fact that there were two wells within five metres of each other is curious. One well had been filled in with white clay mixed with peat. These materials underlie the area, with the clay present at about 3 m and the peat at about 7–8 m. It is assumed that the first well was filled with material excavated during



Figure 4. The earlier of the wells showing postholes of the above ground structure. The later well is visible in the upper left of the photo.

the digging of the second well. The later well had a fill of mixed rubbish including bottles, shoes, timber and miscellaneous material dating to the middle of the 20th century and is most likely from the clean-out or demolition of a farm shed. Four large postholes were located around each well, indicating that structures had stood over the wells, probably for a roof and windlass (Figure 4).

An attempt was made to excavate the wells using a mechanical digger. In the earlier of the two wells wooden planks were set vertically behind the bricks at about 5 m from the surface. Excavations of the wells in October were halted at 5.5–6m when subsidence occurred in the excavation walls. After the very dry spell in January, when the water table had dropped 8 m, another attempt was made to reach the bases of the wells. The working theory was that the first well had not been deep enough to draw water in prolonged dry conditions, and that the second well was dug to a greater depth. Unfortunately the wells defeated a 30 ton digger in February 2008. Despite digging a trench several metres below ground level, and reaching to 11 m below the surface, there was no sign that the bottom of the brick-lined first well was imminent. Safety and engineering considerations overrode curiosity, and the excavations were halted. There was no attempt to reach the base of the second well.

Numerous postholes and the foundation trench of a structure which pre-dated the second well were also found in the yard. One group of postholes belonged to a fence line along the south side of the house that may have been built when the ditches were filled in and the yard was widened. Relatively few discreet rubbish pits were discovered. Instead, the ditches had been used for dumping refuse, especially at the back of the yard, which was also covered by a dense surface scatter of ceramics, glass and metal items.

There was very little faunal material within features, as might be expected of a household in a rural situation with dogs and chickens to consume scraps, and a wide area to dispose of refuse. No concentrations of bone were discovered although occasional butchered sheep and cattle bones were scattered across the site and under the house. A concentration of oyster shells in the base of one of the ditches represents the only 19th century food refuse deposit discovered although the shell paths may also be the result of shellfish meals.

All artefacts, fragments and bone were retained for analysis. There appears to be a wide date range for the items recovered, which is to be expected given the long occupation of the house.

Underfloor excavation

The team returned to the site in December to excavate under the house floor once the house had been dismantled. A grid of 1 m squares was marked

out and material from each was collected and bagged, and the topsoil trowelled down to subsoil. There was a lot of disturbance by rodent burrows under the house and numerous skeletons of small animals. The blocks of volcanic rock that served as house foundations were all uncovered and their pattern could be related to changes made in the structure of the building. Two fireplace bases were uncovered. The original fireplace base, built of volcanic stone, belonged to the Phase I–II portion of the house, and the later double fireplace foundation related to Phase III.

The two shell paths mentioned above were found to continue under the house. The southern path ran along the south side of the Phase I cottage and around towards the position of the front door on the east side. Buildings archaeology had revealed that there had been a lean-to added to the original house on the south side and the layout of the foundation stones indicated its size. The shell path appeared to run around the edge of this lean-to. Other scattered shell in the southeast corner (very disturbed by rodents) suggested that the lean-to had a shell floor, and there was a concentration of coal present here. The other shell path, the northern of the two, curved around to run along the west side of the cottage under the Phase II lean-to. It seems then that both shell paths belonged to Phase I.

Finally the underfloor area was scraped with a mechanical digger to search for any features. Only four were found: three wooden posts under the veranda area and one shell-filled pit under the Phase III portion.

Comparisons to the Westney House

Investigations at Scott House provide an excellent opportunity for comparison with another mid 19th century farmhouse, the Westney house, only 200 m away. The Westney House, built in 1855, was also investigated by CFG Heritage (Campbell and Furey 2007) before being relocated to another part of airport land. Contrasts between the two house sites are apparent. No well was found in the Westney yard but there were two in the yard of Scott House; the under-floor of the Westney house was used for rubbish disposal and the distribution of ceramics related to the age of additions to the house, and to significant family events such as marriage and the introduction of a new wife, while no obviously deliberately discarded deposits were found under Scott House. The ditch and bank enclosure at the Scott House contrasted with the Westney house where no such features were found in the vicinity of the house. Mid to late 19th century barns were recorded at the Westney site showing the relationship between domestic and farm space, and although the location of the early barns at Scott house are known from aerial photographs, the barns no longer exist. Other differences, such as in the quantity of alcohol

bottles recovered from Scott House, compared to very few at Westney House, may relate to the religious affiliations of each household. The Westney's worshipped at the small Westney Road Methodist Church situated on the corner of Ihumatao Road and George Bolt Drive prior to being relocated elsewhere on airport-owned land in 2007. The Scott's did not attend the same church.

Excavation and analysis methods are to be kept consistent between the two sites so that results may be compared.

References

Campbell, M. and L. Furey 2007. Archaeological Investigations at the Westney Farmstead, Mangere. Unpublished report to the New Zealand Historic Places Trust. http://www.cfgheritage.com/2006_16westney.pdf