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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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Food. Taro grew in places in the streams inaccessible to the cattle while karaka trees grew abundantly along the coastal cliffs and in patches back in the bush.

Paqa, oysters, winkles, sea urchins, octopus and crayfish are found among the boulders off the coast. Fish are plentiful with snapper predominating. In the streams, some only a couple of feet wide, native brown trout abound, some up to 8 inches long. Also freshwater mussel and crayfish were found.

Artefacts. I found no artefacts, but Mr. Philip Ward, son of the owner, showed me various specimens that had been found in the surrounding area. They were all classic Maori types.

It would be futile to speculate as to the age of the sites, but by using my measurements and information, Dr. L. Millener, Associate Professor, Botany Department, University of Auckland, assessed the age of the pohutukawa trees growing on the heaps of pebbles as between 400 and 500 years old.

References

- (1) Diamond, J.T. 1961. "Fortified and Settlement Sites in the Waitakere West Coast Area". N.Z. Arch. Ass. Newsletter. Vol. 4, No. 2, p54-55.
- (2) Graham, George. 1922. "Rua-Kopiha. A Peculiar Type of Kumara Store Pit". Journal of the Polynesian Society. Vol. 31, p122-123.

BEACH MIDDENS ON THE COROMANDEL COAST

By R. Jolly and R. Green

The development of the Eastern Coromandel Coast as a resort area is threatening the destruction of numerous valuable middens on the dunes which invariably lie behind beaches along this coast. A number of these dune sites were recorded by the authors in an earlier survey¹ and others have subsequently been added. Moreover, during the last two years,

wherever the complete destruction of sites was likely, one of the authors has investigated them more fully. A full record of the shell, bone and stone material from these sites as well as the materials themselves has been deposited at the Department of Anthropology at the University of Auckland. The information includes shell and bone identifications where possible; an analysis of the flake material by composition, size and number; and a wide range of artefactual material. The notes that follow give some idea of the principal sites and the materials recovered.

Opito

The southern portion of this beach is now being subdivided and a road is projected which will obliterate many of the present middens just inland from the beach. Two sites here have been recorded in the Site Record Scheme and briefly investigated.

Site N 40/1 consists of two middens, an upper and a lower one separated by an incipient creek and a number of feet of sand. High seas have subsequently destroyed the lower midden, but a collection of flakes from it have been analysed and an incomplete adze recorded. The upper midden has produced a fine collection of flake material and pebble hammerstones. The majority (by number and weight) of basaltic flakes vary in size between 2 and 6 cms. They are smaller than those from either the lower midden or Site N 40/2. One broken but polished untanged quadrangular adze, not of Classic form, was recovered in Layer 1 of the upper midden along with the usual selection of shell and bone material.

Site N 40/2 is a rapidly eroding flaking-floor at the southern end of the beach and has been known for some time. An area of 20 cubic feet from this working floor was sampled and all the basaltic flakes from it were counted and the other material identified. Here the overall size of the flakes is not only greater, but their analysis indicates that the majority could not have come from the small broken rough-outs and rejects that were encountered at the site. Rather, they were derived from far larger roughouts which must have been transported elsewhere for final flaking, bruising and polishing. The size of these flakes indeed, lends credulity to the roughouts for adzes of a foot to a foot and a half in length which have been found elsewhere on the surface at this beach and at Sarah's Gully and Otama. The site has produced as well, a stone sinker, dentalium shell necklace units, worked pumice and what is probably a necklace unit made from a valve of the scallop.

Wheritoa

Commercial sand operations at the southern end of this beach have destroyed many sites, and threaten the destruction of more, including a number belonging to the Archaic phase. One working floor, (Site N 53/4) not yet disturbed by these operations, has produced a wide range of material including dog, rat, fish, and moa bone along with a variety of shells. The artefactual assemblage has included broken adzes, drills, worked pumice, sandstone files, backed obsidian knives, broken fishhooks, and hooks in process of manufacture as well as the usual run of worked flakes.

Whangamata

The most disturbed of these beach sites is in the vicinity of the wharf at Whangamata Harbour, known locally as the "port". Roading and parking improvements coupled with holiday activities have largely obliterated what was once an extensive area of midden. Nevertheless a smaller but similar range of artefacts and faunal material like that at Wheritoa has been recovered and preserved.

Reference

- (1) Green R.C. 1959. "A Survey of Sites Along the Coromandel Coast". N.Z. Arch. Assn. Newsletter. Vol.2. No.2. p20-25.

OPITO BEACH: TWO SITES

By D. Trower

The following brief description is of two restricted excavations carried out at Opito Beach, Coromandel Peninsula, from 13th to 14th January, 1962. In both cases the sites were situated in sand dunes sloping on to the beach itself. Figure 1 illustrates some of the artefacts recovered.