



NEW ZEALAND
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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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BRIEF RECORD OF WORK AT
WHITIPIRORUA BEACH (N49/16) AND NEARBY AREA

R.G.W. Jolly

Mr Menefy's farm of 700 acres is part of the peninsula that encloses the Whangamata harbour on the east coast of the Coromandel Peninsula. The main beach is adjacent to the homestead. There are pa sites (N49/25, 27) at each end of it. The erosion of centuries has deposited thousands of boulders of quartz and chert to the north of the beach and obsidian occurs in the land along the usually dry creek that is near the landward side of the southern pa. To the south there are three other beaches with a very tidy pa (N49/32) close to the middle one.

Mr Menefy is an active friendly elderly farmer, for years overworked, but with time never-the-less to be interested in the leisure activities of his neighbours, usually fishing, but in my case the many pieces of evidence of occupation by Polynesian settlers.

Although the farm has now been sold, "development" has dealt with a very small portion for a start and a 10 chain Reserve has been declared along the main beach.

I first explored the main beach area in company with Hugh Simpson about 1956. We found evidence of a fishhook manufactory exposed by the wind. In 1962, a party consisting of a one time wildlife ranger Mr L.C. Bell and Eleanor Crosby, Elizabeth Shaw and myself found further surface evidence, notably a one-piece hook and seven necklace rings made from fossil Dentalium shell.

In 1964, Molly Nicholls recorded all surface evidence then visible on a sketch map (Fig.1). As recently as 1973 it was still possible to locate the position of new surface finds on this map (see key to Fig. 1).

When I first visited the area, a fence extended along the beach which was then free of cattle. This became dilapidated and was removed. The fact that cattle were free to roam over any archaeological activity did not help and inclined one to use mostly 1 metre squares which could be completed in one day. Many attempts were made to mark these but over years the "bottle on end" markers have been destroyed and a flood took chains of fence away and the sighting marks with it.

At first it seemed probable that the whole fish hook area would be obliterated by sand recovery. For this reason a datum line was set up and whenever possible a bit more work was done on the main fish hook site (Site 1). At a later stage it was found that there was indeed another manufactory north of the first and Tony Parsons picked up what he called unusual pieces, indeed tabs. This became known as Molly's site (Site 2).

Many will be aghast at this little better than fossicking investig-

ation. However, anyone confronted with the facts of quite unprincipled fossicking and increasing thousands of people on pleasure bent with equally numerous children, several unusual storms and the road making and site levelling activities of developers from Tauranga to Cape Colville, not to mention vigorously farmed areas on the Hauraki Plains would, I think, be inclined to do as the writer has done, namely salvage as much as possible and report to the more active archaeologists that are deemed professional, depositing with them the material recovered. The collections from Whitipirorua are now held in the Auckland Museum.

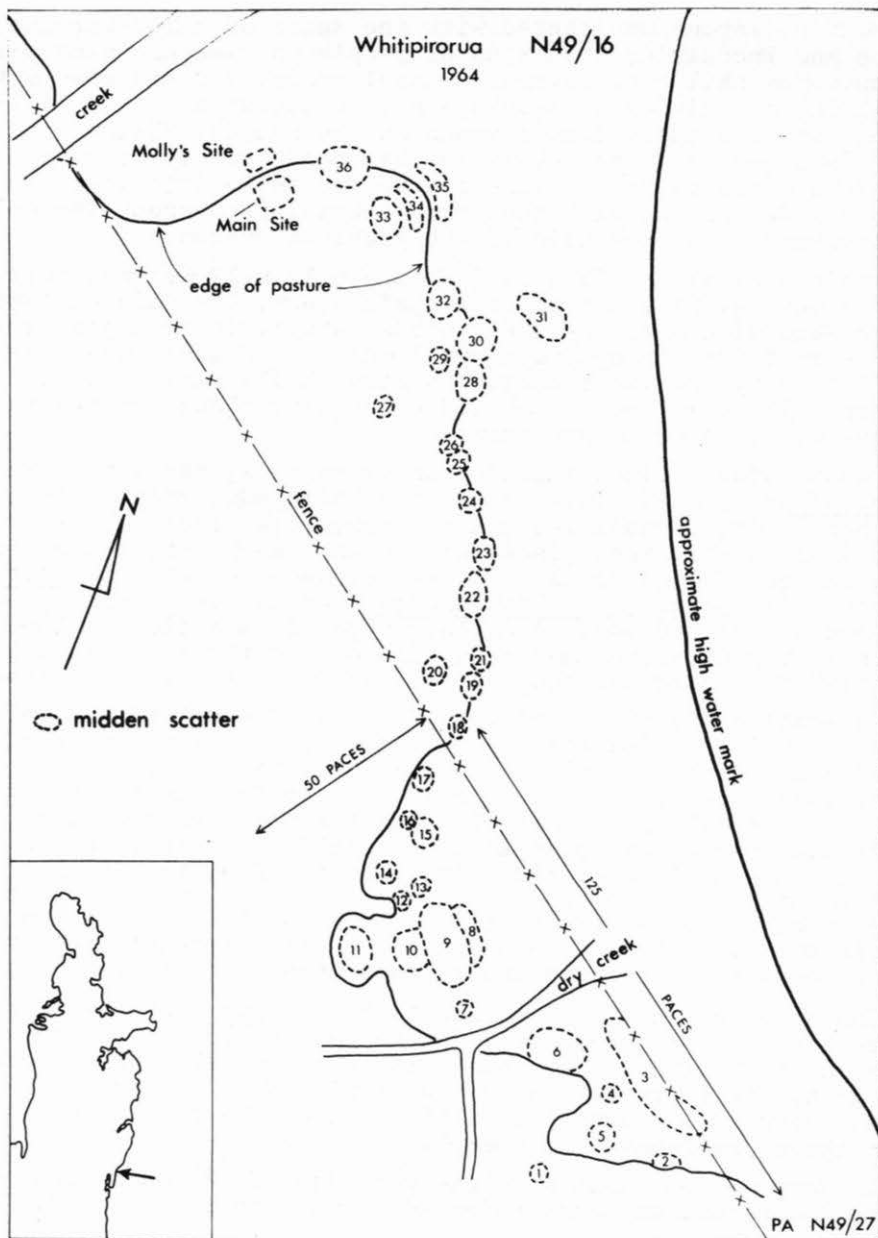
The main hook floor (Site 1) is roughly 12 x 12 metres, Molly's site about 6 x 6 metres. They are about 1 chain apart. The main culture layer is beneath sand with ordinary shell midden above. In some places the layer is about 30 cm thick, in others about 1 metre. Mussels must have been easily obtained by the first comers as many shells rest close to the natural sand. There is much thick midden in many places on the main beach. Thicknesses of up to 60 cm are common.

The most notable finds include: an ivory reel, necklace rings of fossil Dentalium, a shell lure shank, two knife-edge stone files, a complete moa bone hook, a small ivory hook, many file pieces of all sizes and shapes, moa egg shell, many pieces of broken bone hooks, caches of file material, caches of good drill point stone, many segments of Dentalium nanum, many drill points, Cookia sulcata hook pieces, a very good rough-out adze and a finished adze of Archaic type. In addition, 6 lure shanks were given to the Auckland Museum by visitors to the area and a large finely finished 1A adze was found by a fisherman crossing the beach.

The so-called "Secret Site" (N49/33) was adjacent to the third beach and small pa, and a medium sized pohutukawa tree grew on it. The whole lot was washed away on the occasion of an extraordinary tide and gale some years ago. This took about half a chain off the frontages along Whangamata beach and Otahu creek as well as blocking the harbour mouth with sand. A small site disappeared at Opito also. It would be interesting to know the cause of this unusually high tide. The material from the "Secret Site" was obtained during a visit in the company of Mr Cyril Hindmarsh. The really large pieces of moa bone were sent in to the Auckland University Anthropology Department. Tree roots made investigation of this site very difficult and on account of its remoteness I was unable to visit it much.

Mr Don Melrose found what appear to be two rua near the "Secret Site". The adjacent pa is well preserved. Sad to say the previous owner cut through the ditch and bank with a horse scoop in order to allow cattle access to the main area. There are several areas of midden at the second beach, some under grass cover, some exposed. Within part of the pine forest adjoining the farm there are lengths of trench.

It is very obvious that much use was made of the warm east coast. It is easy to understand why Cook referred to the Bay of "plenty". The shell



fish beds in this area have persisted inspite of very severe fishing of late and must have been really rich in the past under conditions of intelligent use.

If it is true that thermal activity had a limiting effect on the moa population they soon recovered. There are certainly fish hook sites more or less evenly spaced from East Cape to Cape Colville.

I am indebted to Mr and Mrs Menefy for their kindness. Over the years I have been assisted by the following people: Hugh Simpson, Don Melrose, Cyril Hindmarsh, Pat Murdock, David Trower and two of his friends, Tony Parsons, L.C. Bell, Beryl Jolly, Molly Nicholls, Eleanor Crosby, Elizabeth Shaw, Janet Davidson and occasional friendly people. In 1973 I was able to show Professor Green over the main beach area.

Key to numbered areas on Fig. 1

1. 3 x 4 metres. Very small obsidian boulders, grey, good quality, approx. 1/2in. diameter. Few Nerita melanotragus, Lunella smaragda, Chione stutchburyi, pipi (Paphies australe), limpets.
2. Burnt shell, mussel and pipi. Charcoal, large stones. Unburnt limpet, Lunella smaragda, mussel, Haliotis sp. Struthiolaria papulosa, Chione stutchburyi, Paphies subtriangulatum, Cookia sulcata, 1 grey obsidian knife.
3. Unburnt shells, same as at 2, and large stone boulders. Stone file. Oyster shells.
4. Similar to 1. Obsidian includes grey boulders and green flakes.
5. Human bone (?), probably one individual.
6. Scatter of Lunella smaragda, Chione stutchburyi, Paphies australe, P. subtriangulatum, small grey obsidian boulders, a few chert-like cores, Haliotis sp., mussel, some bone, possibly sea mammal.
7. Many large flakes of grey obsidian, some with boulder cortex, a few large basalt flakes, a few smallish chert boulders, 1 dog jaw.
8. Partly grassed. Many large obsidian flakes (grey), dog bone, bird bone (large sea bird?), human bone (?), seal bone (?), Haliotis sp., Paphies australe, P. subtriangulatum, Chione stutchburyi, Nerita melanotragus, Lunella smaragda, limpet. Dentalium rings found by Eleanor Crosby.

9. Thin scatter, mainly small boulders (chert?), some large grey obsidian flakes, very few chert flakes, considerable quantity of good quality green obsidian, little fishbone, fragments of Paphies australe, Neothais scalaris, waterworn shell.
10. Similar to 9 but more grey obsidian than green, and more bone (moa or human?), chert flakes, fish bone, bird bone. Dentalium rings found here in 1973.
11. Mainly rough stone, a little obsidian, both green and grey.
12. Boulders, hangi stone, human bone, obsidian (more green than grey), Struthiolaria papulosa, Paphies australe, Chione stutchburyi, basalt flakes, fish bone, seal bone.
13. Small heap of grey obsidian.
14. Heap of grey obsidian, both boulders and flakes, Fish bone, human bone, large examples of Lunella smaragda, Chione stutchburyi, Nerita melanotragus a few chert flakes.
15. Pumice, a few boulders, one or two worn shells.
16. Paphies australe, 1 chert boulder.
17. Haliotis sp., Chione stutchburyi, Paphies australe, P. subtriangulatum, large Lunella smaragda, Struthiolaria papulosa, hangi stones, charcoal, boulders, human bone, chert cores, basalt flakes, grey obsidian.
18. Much as 17, with a few flakes of grey obsidian, basalt, chert.
19. Black discoloration, hangi stones, grey obsidian boulders, very fragmentary shell. Adze found in 1973.
20. A few basalt flakes, shell almost entirely small Chione stutchburyi, a few Paphies australe, P. subtriangulatum, Struthiolaria papulosa.
21. Mainly large P. australe, Haliotis sp. Lunella smaragda, mussel.
22. Burnt, hangi stones, large P. australe, mussel, Lunella smaragda, a few flakes of basalt, also a few grey obsidian flakes.
23. Large Chione stutchburyi, large Paphies australe, Neothais scalaris, Lunella smaragda, oyster, human bone(?).
24. Fragmentary shell, spill from 23, also chert, grey obsidian, basalt flakes, Lunella smaragda, mussel, stones.

25. Grey area, hangi stones, Lunella smaragda, Neothais scalaris, green obsidian.
26. High pile of midden, mainly Struthiolaria papulosa, Chione stutchburyi, moderate amounts of grey obsidian, much chert, cores, flakes of basalt.
27. Hangi stones, Chione stutchburyi (small), a few Struthiolaria papulosa, Paphies subtriangulatum.
28. Large mound, Paphies australe, Lunella smaragda, a few Chione stutchburyi, basalt flakes.
29. Heap of Chione stutchburyi, Lunella smaragda.
30. Lunella smaragda, limpet, Haliotis sp., mussel. Paphies australe, Neothais scalaris, hangi stones, Nerita melanotragus, Struthiolaria papulosa, grey obsidian, retouched basalt stone.
31. Almost on high tide mark, scatter of Struthiolaria papulosa, basalt flakes, obsidian, adze flake.
32. Basalt flakes, grey obsidian boulders, Paphies australe, Chione stutchburyi, Lunella smaragda, Neothais scalaris, Struthiolaria papulosa, chert, limpets.
33. Hangi stones, top of mound, Paphies australe, Chione stutchburyi, Struthiolaria papulosa, Lunella smaragda.
34. As at 33, with a few grey obsidian flakes, chert.
35. Hangi area, large Chione stutchburyi, Lunella smaragda, mussel, Paphies australe, oyster, Nerita melanotragus, basalt, obsidian.
36. Spill and blowout, basalt flakes in quantity, shell as at 35 with bone (human?).