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DATE FOR MAORI BACK PACK

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In 1983 the remains of a prehistoric back pack were found at Flock Hill in inland Canterbury. The pack was of a type not previously reported in that it comprised basically a large draw-string bag fitted over a wooden frame. It contained the fabric of another such pack, together with other artefacts and some faunal remains. Sticks, probably intended as firewood had been placed in the limestone shelter with the pack. A preliminary report on the find appeared in Volume 27, Number 3, of the Newsletter (McCulloch and Trotter 1984), and a more detailed account was published as Records of the Canterbury Museum (Trotter 1987).

An age at least 400 years was suggested on the basis of the uniqueness of the design (there are no known reports of such a design being used at the time of European contact or settlement), the artefacts found with it, especially two unfinished shell pendants, and by the known prehistory of the area. Because of its value it was decided not to sacrifice any portion of the pack for radiocarbon dating.

A date has now been obtained for a sample of coprosma twig firewood that was found with the pack.

In terms of the old half-life the date is 470 ± 55 years B.P. (NZ 7466). The new half-life age, corrected for secular variation, is 530 ± 70 B.P.

References

McCulloch, Beverley, and Trotter, Michael M. 1984. A prehistoric frame pack from Inland Canterbury. N.Z.A.A. Newsletter 27 (3):140-43.

Trotter, Michael M. 1987. A prehistoric back pack from Inland Canterbury. Records of the Canterbury Museum 10 (2):9-24.