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Preliminary Report on the Archaeological Excavation of the New Deptford Shipbuilding Yard (O05/317), Horeke, New Zealand

Matthew Carter

Department of Archaeology and History, La Trobe University

Introduction

The New Deptford shipbuilding yard (site O05/317) is located in the township of Horeke on the shores of the Hokianga Harbour, New Zealand (Figures 1 & 2). This shipbuilding yard operated from 1826 until 1830 and is one of New Zealand's oldest Pākehā manufacturing establishments. Between 11 and 23 January 2016, under Archaeological Authority 2016/471, an area of approximately 252 m² of the shipbuilding yard was archaeologically excavated. The excavation uncovered a considerable volume of artefactual material, and a number of features distributed across the excavation areas. This paper presents the preliminary results of this work.

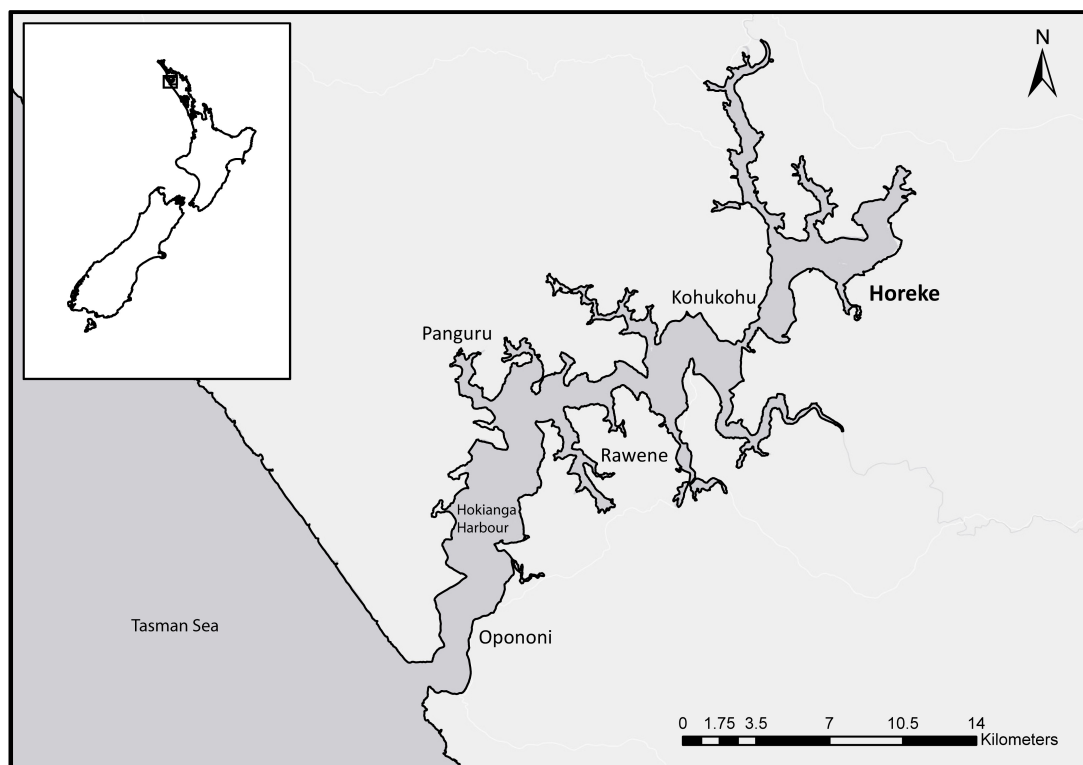


Figure 1. The location of the township of Horeke in Northland, New Zealand.



Figure 2. Aerial view of the site showing the approximate boundaries of the shipbuilding yard (dashed line), and the excavation units (Aerial Vision Ltd.).

History of Horeke and the New Deptford Shipbuilding Yard

The Māori occupation of Northland has been determined from radiocarbon dating to be from around 700-800 years B.P. (Furey n.d.: 60). This region, including the Hokianga Harbour, had a suitable climate and soils for the cultivation of kumara and taro while the waters of the harbour provided a rich and easily accessible source of fish and shellfish (New Zealand Historic Places Trust 1988: 9-10). The cultivation of alluvial terraces close to rivers and along the inland harbour coasts, such as at Horeke, provided readily available food supplies for the inhabitants of the Hokianga.

Hokianga Māori did not receive their first European visitors until 1819 when Thomas Kendall and John King made the overland trek from their mission station in the Bay of Islands (Lee 1987: 33). However, European interaction with the Hokianga greatly increased in November 1826 when Captain William Salmon Deloitte, master of the barque *Faith*, and Captain William Stewart purchased a “Portion of Land called E‘Oraka” from the local Chiefs Muriwai, Te Taonui, and Matangi (OLC 27/27 quoted in Ross n.d.: 1). This transaction is the first recorded land purchase in the Hokianga.

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The new owners of the land moved swiftly to consolidate their claim, with Deloitte quoted as saying “early the next morning, the English Ensign being hoisted & a six pounder landed, preparations were made for the Erection of a Fort Dock Yard, Jetty, Superintendents House, Gardens &c. &c. the Natives assisting being paid” (OLC27/27 quoted in Ross n.d.: 2). Interestingly, there is no further mention of Deloitte or Stewart in relation to the Horeke shipbuilding yard. Instead, it appears that they soon transferred their land to Sydney-based merchants Raine, Ramsay, and Browne, or had purchased it on their behalf in the first place. Seven months after the initial purchase the shipbuilding enterprise at Horeke had come to the attention of Australian commentators with the *Australian* (1 June 1827: 3) noting that “about fifty Englishmen from this port are at work there in sawing deals, and instructing the natives in shipbuilding.” This ‘shipbuilding’ referred to laying down the keel for a schooner of around 40 tons under the direction of David Clarke, the superintendent of the yard. The *Enterprise* (as she was to be christened) “was put together with timbers of the Puriri and Rata trees, and planked with the Kouri [sic]” (Polack 1838: 194-195).

In October 1827 and May 1828, the artist Augustus Earle visited the shipbuilding yard and produced two watercolours of the site (Figures 3 & 4). The vessel that can be seen in frame in Figure 3 and almost completed in Figure 4, was the *New Zealander*, a brigantine of 142 tons (Parsons 1983: 27; Polack 1838: 196). Following its completion in November 1828, the *New Zealander* arrived in Sydney on her maiden voyage on 9 December 1828 (*Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* 10 December 1828: 2).

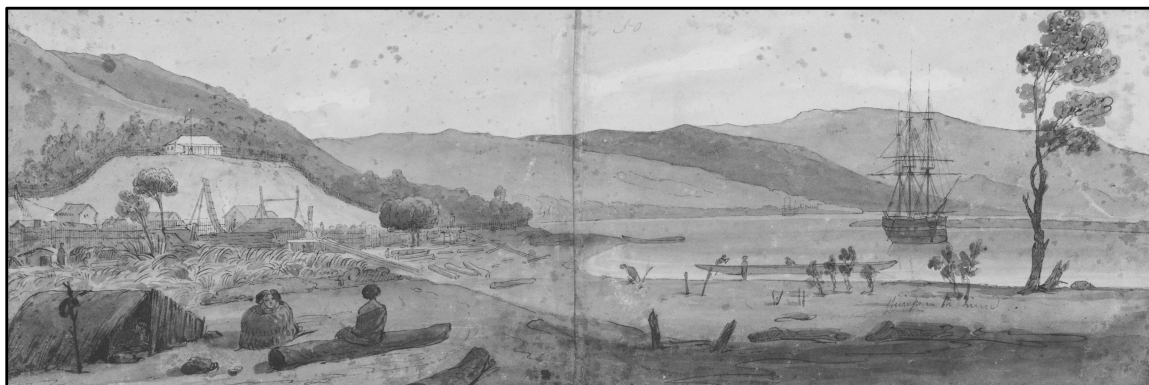


Figure 3. 'The Showrackki commonly called Deptford Dock Yard, a shipbuilding establishment belonging to some Sydney merchants in the Shukeangha River, New Zealand' as depicted by Augustus Earle in 1827 (Rex nan Kivell Collection, National Library of Australia. pic-an2838528 NK12/137).

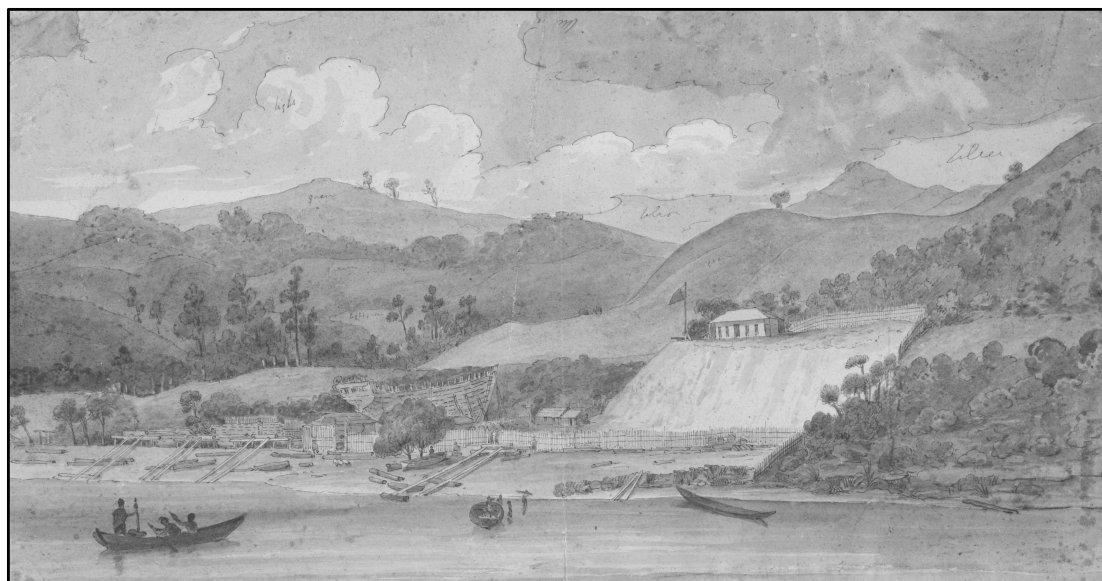


Figure 4. 'The E.O. Racky or Deptford Dockyard, on the E.O. Keangha River, N. Zealand' as depicted by Augustus Earle in 1828 (Rex nan Kivell Collection, National Library of Australia. C18 #T175 NK12/138).

In 1829, another vessel the *Sir George Murray* was laid down at Horeke (Hawkins 1960: 21). However, according to Hawkins (1960: 21), before the ship was completed the partnership of Raine, Ramsay and Browne became bankrupt and it is likely that work continued on the vessel under the trustees of Raine's estate. She was completed in late 1830 and sailed for Sydney under Captain Clarke with a crew of 23 men and laden with flax and timber, arriving on 18 November 1830 (Hawkins 1960: 21). Upon her arrival she was put up for auction, and in January 1831 she was purchased for £1300 by Captain Thomas McDonnell (*Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* 22 January 1831: 3). McDonnell, a former Royal Navy Lieutenant, also bought the shipbuilding yard at Horeke. Under McDonnell's direction, shipbuilding at Horeke ceased and instead work concentrated on the harvesting of timber for spars, planks and rickers, and the processing of flax, all for sale in the Sydney market. In 1842, Horeke's importance took a major blow when McDonnell's house and a number of other buildings were destroyed by a fire, which as Lee (1987: 130) notes coincided with "a general decline in the establishment's fortunes". The decline of Horeke was such that around 1858, McDonnell, in serious debt, left Horeke and moved to Auckland where he died in 1864 after a fall from his horse (Callaghan & Johnson 2013: 9).

In 1865 Captain Thomas Stephenson Rowntree was recorded as owning the freehold land at Te Horeke, Hokianga, most likely having purchased it from

McDonnell's Estate (*New Zealand Herald* 12 April 1865: 8). As described years later in the *New Zealand Herald* (5 March 1892: 1) Captain Rowntree built a mill on the section which was subsequently taken over by John Webster. However, by the time of the newspaper article in 1892 nothing remained at the site “except the foundations of the old mill”. From this time on, it appears that the area on which the shipbuilding yard was originally situated was used predominantly for the grazing of cows with a small milking bale built towards the back of the site (Heatley V. 2016 pers. comm., Jan 2016).

Setting

Today, the New Deptford shipbuilding yard is located within the township of Horeke on the upper reaches of the Hokianga Harbour. As can be seen in Figure 2, the site has been modified by the construction of the road that runs across that area from east to west, the houses that are now built astride the foreshore, and addition of the war memorial. Despite this modification, on the landward side of the road approximately 2.3 acres of the site remains largely unaffected by modern development, with this area currently in use as a grazing paddock for horses.

The Excavation

A pre-disturbance geomagnetic and total station survey of the site was undertaken in June 2015 by Dr Hans-Dieter Bader of Archaeology Solutions Ltd. Based on the results of this survey, five areas were selected for excavation (Figure 5).

To capture the selected anomalies recorded during the geomagnetic survey, Sam Lee from Thomson Survey Ltd used a Differential GPS to lay out the excavation units. Once these areas had been established, the excavation areas on the coastal flat had their topsoil removed using a 5-ton mechanical excavator with a 1 metre wide cleaning bucket. Once the topsoil had been removed from each area, all excavation work was undertaken by hand with excavation proceeding in 50 mm spits.

The location of all in situ finds and features was recorded using a Leica robotic total station (Figure 7). Each feature was also drawn (stratigraphic and plan), photographed, and measured, with the information then written on pre-prepared feature forms. The excavated areas and features were also recorded by top-down and oblique photography, enabling 3D photogrammetry models of the areas and features to be made.

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Figure 5. The geomagnetic and topographical survey with the excavation areas overlaid.



Figure 6. Archaeologists excavating a 50 mm spit in Area 2.

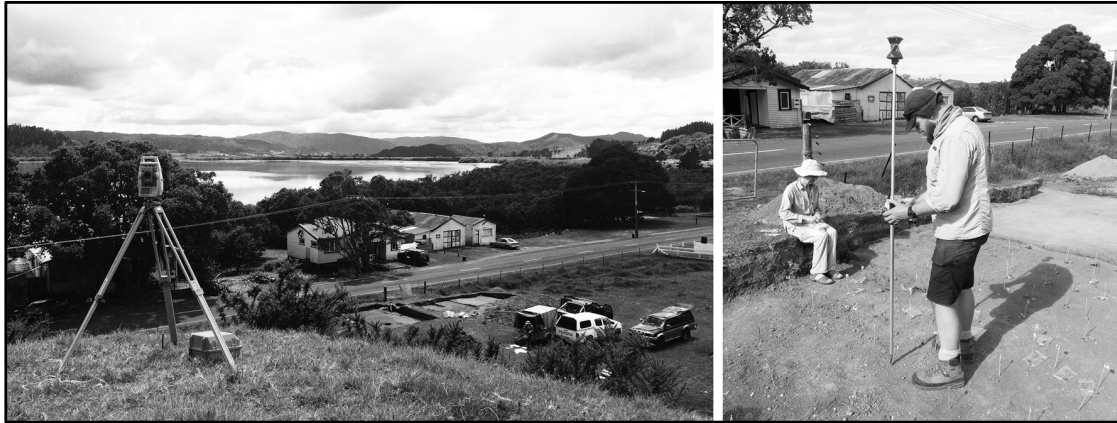


Figure 7. Wesley Maguire of Heritage Survey Consultants recording the location of finds using a robotic total station. (M. Carter and K. Sharpe).

Preliminary Excavation Results

The excavation opened up a total area of 252 m² across the site, with a total of 2325 finds and 27 features recorded across six excavation areas and one test trench (Figure 8). The 27 features recorded during the excavation represent a range of activities at the site, from rubbish disposal through to the presence of structures. These features are summarised in Table 1 and a number of these are also illustrated below (Figures 9 to 11).

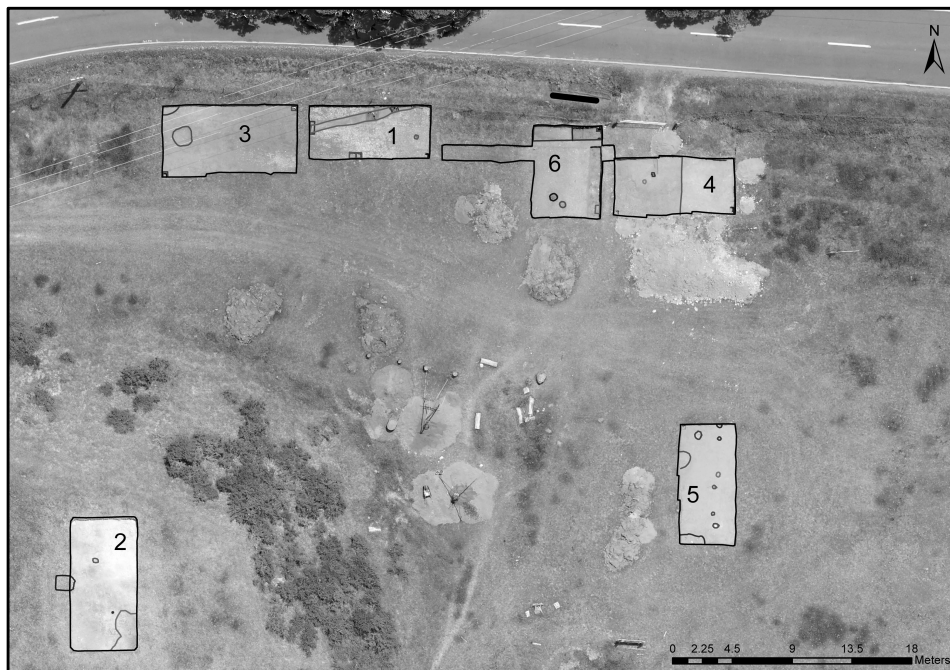


Figure 8. Site plan showing the numbered excavation areas and the features recorded in each area.

Table 1. Table showing the features recorded during the 2016 excavation.

No.	Feature description	Artefacts	Left in situ?
1	Circular cut feature with mixed soil fill and some artefacts	Yes	Yes
2	Circular cut feature with mixed soil fill and some artefacts	Yes	Yes
3	Shell floor/layer	Yes	Yes
4	Post hole	Yes	No
5	Small depression/pit	Yes	No
6	Post hole	Yes	No
7	Small depression/pit	Yes	No
8	Small depression/pit	Yes	No
9	Small depression/pit	Yes	Yes
10	Small depression/pit	Yes	No
11	Circular cut feature with mixed soil fill and artefacts	No	Yes
12	Circular cut pit	No	Yes
13	Depression	Yes	No
14	Modern circular cut pit	No	Yes
15	Linear drain	Yes	Yes
16	Sandstone alignment	Yes	Yes
17	Timber	Yes	Yes
18	Shell path	Yes	No
19	Wooden stake	No	No
20	Brick and stone fireplace	Yes	Yes
21	Post hole	Yes	Yes
22	In situ post	No	No
23	Brick and wood alignment	Yes	Yes
24	Post hole	Yes	Yes
25	In situ post	Yes	Yes
26	In situ post	Yes	Yes
27	Post hole	Yes	Yes



Figure 9. Feature 9, a small rubbish pit, with the artefacts found within it.



Figure 10. Half section of Feature 15, a linear drain, with Feature 17, a wooden board.



Figure 11. Feature 20, a brick and stone fireplace.

Artefacts

The analysis of the assemblage from the New Deptford excavation is yet to be completed in its entirety. However, from the initial work, a range of artefacts have been recorded, including gunflints (Figure 12), copper alloy ships' fastenings (Figure 13), domestic ceramics (Figure 12), Kauri gum (Figure 13), flaked and ground stone artefacts (Figure 14), and a possible gaming token (Figure 15). These and the many other artefacts recovered will provide insights into the lives and times of the people who lived and worked at the New Deptford shipbuilding yard.

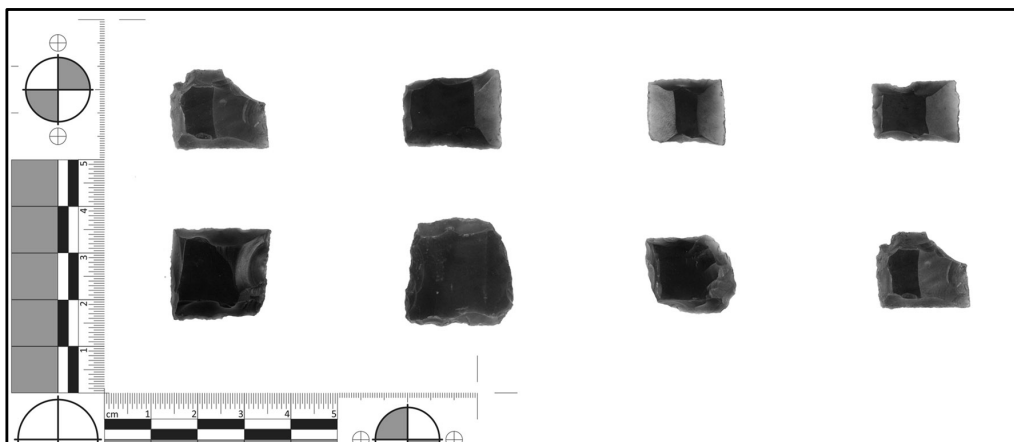


Figure 12. Gun flints recovered from the site, most likely representing the use of both muskets and pistols.

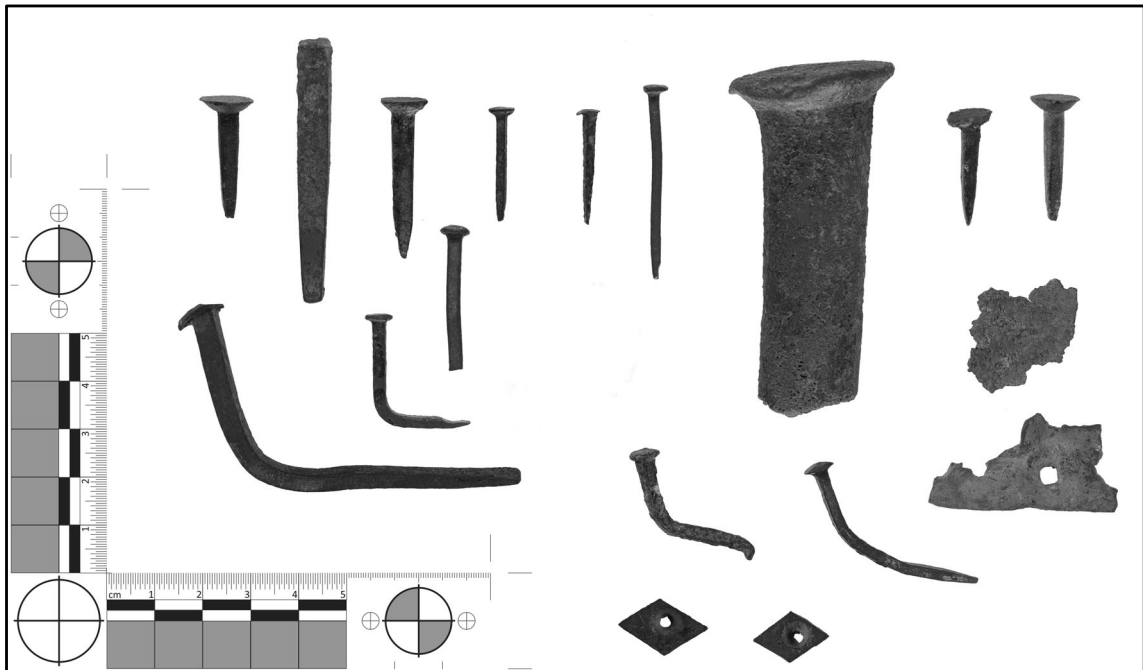


Figure 13. Copper alloy fastenings and sheathing most likely associated with shipbuilding at the site.

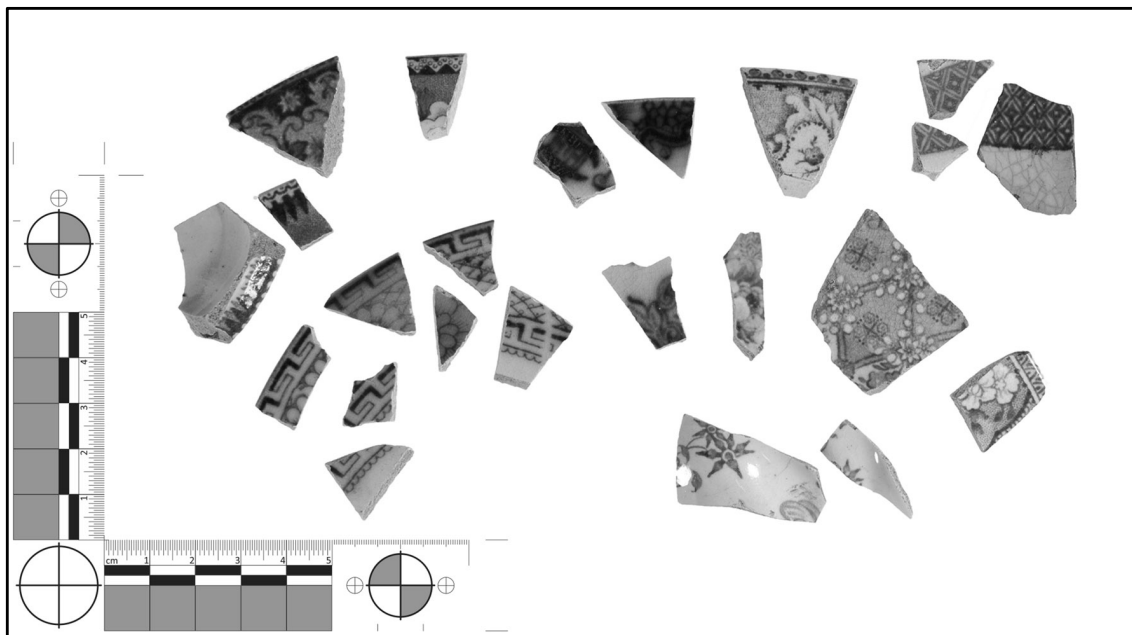


Figure 12. A small sample of the blue decorated ceramics found at the site.

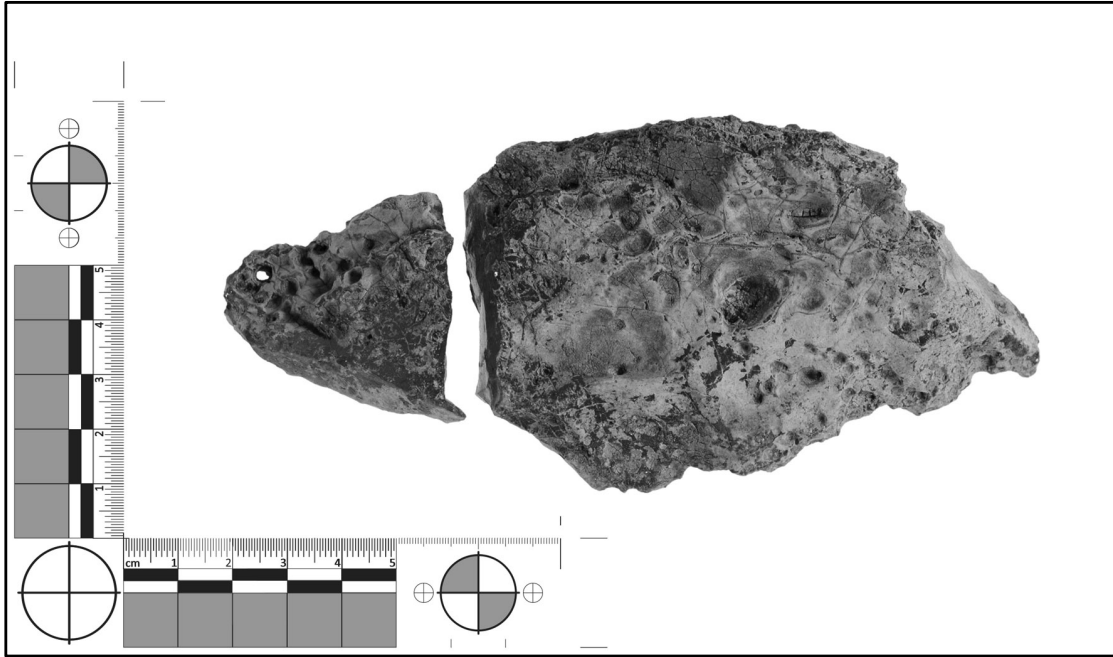


Figure 13. A large piece of Kauri gum recovered during the excavation.

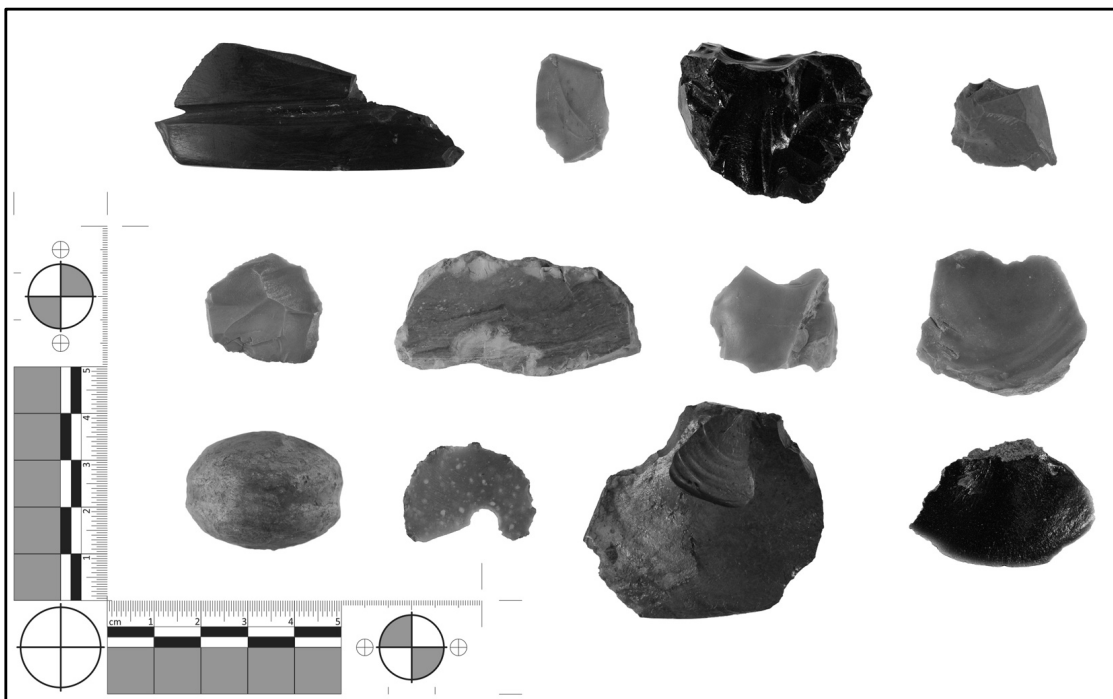


Figure 14. Flaked and ground stone artefacts uncovered during the excavation.

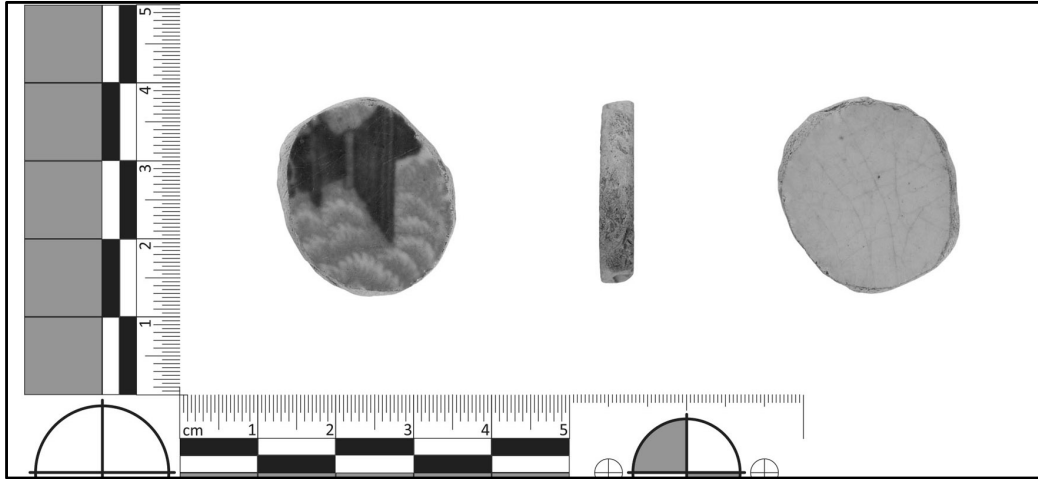


Figure 15. A shaped ceramic fragment possibly used as a gaming piece.

Discussion

Based on the stratigraphy recorded at the site and the artefact analysis undertaken to date, at this stage, a broad understanding of how the site was used over time can be postulated.

Prior to 1826 and the establishment of the New Deptford shipbuilding yard at the site, the lower terrace appears to have been utilised by Māori. Evidence for this is based on the presence of fire-cracked rock, charcoal and shell midden uncovered in Test pit 6 and in the test trench along the roadside drain (Figure 16). It is also possible that the site was used for gardening at this time, as what has been interpreted as a ‘made soil’ by Dr Hans Bader was encountered in Test pit 7.

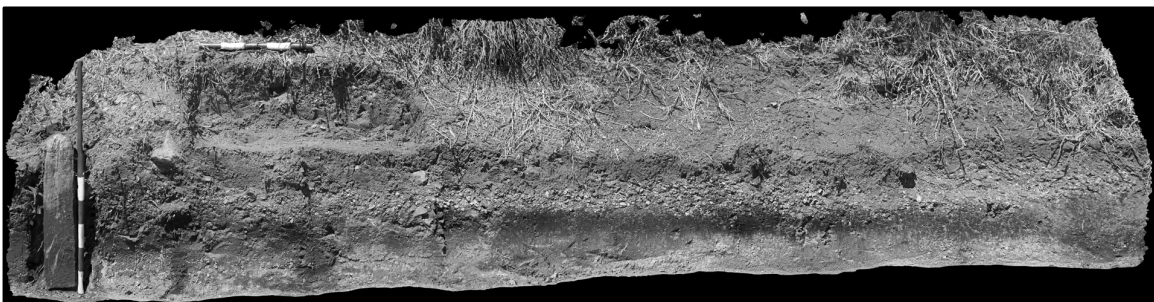


Figure 16. 3D model of the roadside test trench showing the stratigraphy in this area of the site.

The arrival of Europeans to the area is marked by the introduction of European style artefacts at the site. In order to create suitable working

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surfaces for the shipbuilding and timber milling activities that were to be undertaken at the site, the European arrivals laid down working surfaces which comprised of shell (possibly redeposited midden) and imported gravel. Structures associated with these activities would also have been constructed at this time and may be evidenced by in situ posts (Features 22, 25 and 26) and post holes (Features 6, 7 and 27). Evidence for the activities undertaken on the lower terrace during this period is represented by the artefacts that were lost or intentionally discarded. These artefacts became part of the various working floors and include ships' fastenings, clay pipes, musket balls and flints, various domestic ceramic items as well as glass bottles. Interestingly, associated with these artefacts were a significant number of flaked stone and glass artefacts, suggesting Māori interaction with the site continued with the establishment of the shipyard.

On the upper terrace, despite Māori oral tradition of considerable occupation/use, no evidence for pre-1826 activity was found in the area excavated. The first archaeological evidence for activity was the remains of the chimney (Feature 20) from site Superintendent's house that was constructed upon the arrival of the shipbuilders. A range of artefacts were also uncovered in this area that appear to have been lost or discarded outside the house.

With the cessation of shipbuilding around 1831, the site was used as a timber milling yard and artefacts continued to be lost and discarded in much the same way across the areas excavated. By 1892, the site had ceased to be used for industrial purposes and it appears that from this time it was mainly used for the grazing of livestock. In the early twentieth century, a road was built along the beach at the northern aspect of the site and this was followed by the construction of a number of houses along the now altered foreshore.

Preliminary Conclusions

This paper presents the preliminary results from the 2016 archaeological excavation at the site of the New Deptford shipbuilding yard. This work excavated a small percentage of the overall site but found considerable evidence for the post-1826 use of the site in the form of features and artefacts. The analysis of the artefacts from the site is ongoing, but based on the initial finds, this assemblage has the potential to provide a great deal of interesting information regarding this pivotal period in Māori-Pākehā relations and New Zealand's history.

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