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## EXCAVATIONS AT NORTH PARARAKI, PALLISER BAY, 1958-59

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This paper discusses two small excavations carried out under the auspices of the Dominion Museum<sup>1</sup> at a site on the north side of the Pararaki River Mouth, Palliser Bay, in 1958-59 (Fig. 1). The site is recorded as N168/1 (S28/28) and N168/43 (S28/70) and will be referred to as the North Pararaki site. The excavations came about as a result of representations to the Ethnologist at the Dominion Museum, Dr Terry Barrow, by Keith Cairns, a resident of Masterton and a member of both the Polynesian Society and the New Zealand Archaeological Association. Cairns regarded the site as particularly significant, and it was to figure prominently in his thinking about Wairarapa prehistory. He included some notes on the site in an article he wrote on the prehistory of the Wairarapa for the *Wairarapa Times-Age* (Cairns 1971) and he later published a few brief notes and details of a radiocarbon date he had obtained from the site (Cairns 1986). However, the results of the 1958-59 excavation and his subsequent investigations at the North Pararaki site still remained largely unpublished when he died in 1988. In his unpublished papers, now in the Alexander Turnbull Library, there is sufficient information to reconstruct an outline of his work there from 1958 onwards.

### SOURCES

This account of the excavations is based largely on unpublished manuscript material in the Keith Cairns Papers, Alexander Turnbull Library, and on G.L. Adkin's (n.d) unpublished record of the 1959 Dominion Museum excavation, a copy of which was provided by Ian Keyes. The discussion also draws on the results of the Wairarapa Archaeological Research Programme (Leach and Leach 1979a).

Over the years Cairns produced a number of drafts of a paper on the North Pararaki site. These drafts have many passages in common but there is also much evidence of paragraphs being re-written and new material added as time passed. Parallels with other Palliser Bay sites were noted as the material from the Wairarapa Research Programme began to become available in the 1970s. Cairns's various drafts are held in two folders. Each folder contains two drafts but in both folders the pages of two different drafts have been interleaved one with the other. One folder (88-070-4/09) contains the earlier drafts and a second folder (88-070-4/08) contains the later drafts. Material in the second

folder was being actively worked on in 1985. There is related material in other folders. Negatives and photographs, including copies of some Dominion Museum photographs, are held in f88-070-18/13. The ten Dominion Museum photographs of the 1959 excavation are held by the Museum of New Zealand as negative numbers A3300-3309.

Adkin's unpublished record is a straightforward, well-presented account of the 1959 excavation. It is particularly valuable as it provides a detailed, and, in some cases, quite different, interpretation of the features found at the North Pararaki site. Unattributed material in what follows is derived either from Cairns or Adkin.

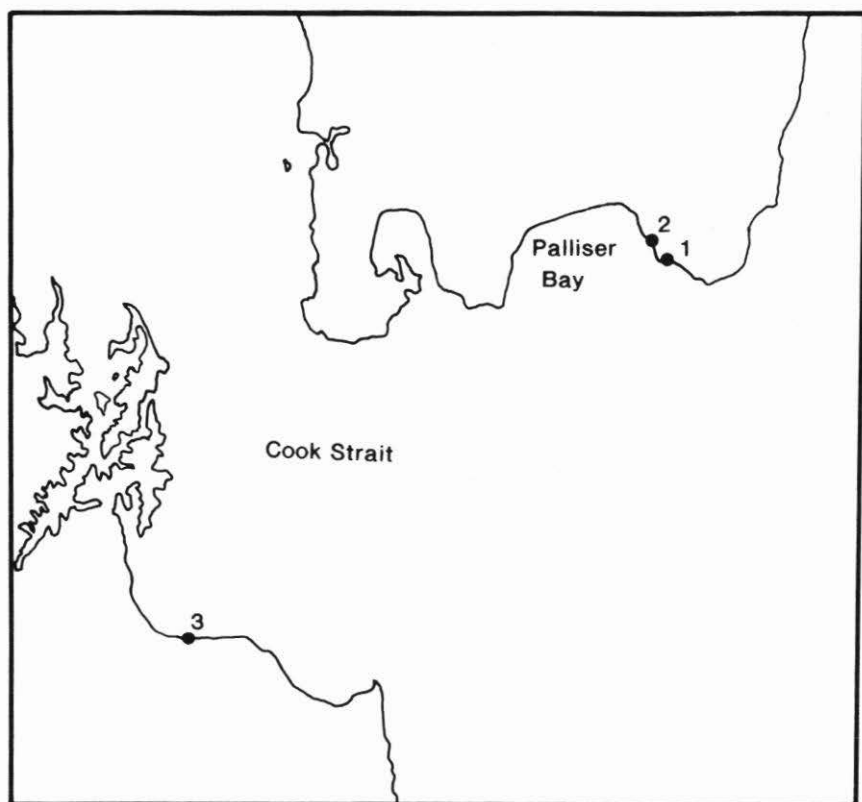


Figure 1. Cook Strait showing Palliser Bay and the locations of the North Pararaki Site (1), the Washpool Midden Site (2), and the Wairau Bar Site (3).

The Wairarapa Archaeological Research Programme (Leach and Leach 1979a) produced detailed descriptions and plans of many Palliser Bay archaeological sites, including those at the mouth of the Pararaki River. The research also produced a synthesis of the prehistory of Palliser Bay which provides an appropriate context in which to place the results of research at the North Pararaki site.

## THE SITE

The North Pararaki site lies on the coastal platform on the north bank of the Pararaki River in Palliser Bay (Fig. 2). The coastal platform is made up of a succession of tectonically uplifted beach ridges and is backed by high cliffs. There is considerable evidence of occupation right across the coastal platform at this point. The North Pararaki site is situated on the second beach ridge inland from the present-day coast. This area is exceptional for the number of human burials known to have been found there. The burials were concentrated on the section of beach ridge immediately next to the river but there is evidence of other forms of occupation for some distance along the beach ridge. Within the burial area itself there are a range of other features present including stone mounds, patches of fire shattered stones, and an L-shaped structure outlined by stones.

Stone rows cover an estimated 9.3 ha on the north bank of the Pararaki River (H.M. Leach 1976:30, H.M. Leach 1979:144). They are built largely on old beach ridges, but they encroach on a consolidated fan at one point, and spread out over river terraces at another. There is evidence of occupation on the second and third beach ridges, with an area of overlap of features associated with domestic activity and the stone rows on the third ridge. An unpublished report (Anderson, Prickett, and Prickett n.d., see also B.F. Leach (1976:281)), describes rescue excavations at Pararaki when a new road and bridge were under construction in 1971. Two stone-edged hearths were located on the bulldozed surface of the third beach ridge. Numerous greywacke, obsidian, and chert artefacts were recovered, along with a range of other tools and midden material.

By the late 1950s, erosion was regularly uncovering archaeological features, including burials, on the second beach ridge. The existence of burials and artefacts became well known locally and the area was regularly fossicked. The North Pararaki site was brought to Cairns's attention in 1955 by Russell Broughton, a part time resident of Palliser Bay. Broughton believed that the burials being exposed by erosion lay under mounds or within circles of large water worn stones. Cairns's observations tended to confirm this. He became convinced that the site contained evidence of unusual early burial practices. Accordingly, he set about enlisting help to investigate the site but he had difficulty convincing others of the site's significance. He told Wellington archaeologists Bruce Palmer and Sue Davis about the site in 1957 but his claims were met with some skepticism. The following year, however, he

succeeded in interesting Barrow in the project.

At Barrow's request, Cairns sought the consent of local kaumatua for a proposed excavation. The kaumatua, however, indicated that, as the burials did not belong to their people, they had no interest in the matter. Cairns, writing in 1985, noted that attitudes towards burials in the local Maori community had changed significantly since the late 1950s.

## THE 1958 EXCAVATION

The initial investigation was undertaken on the weekend of 27-28 September 1958. The investigation was undertaken by Barrow, Cairns, and Broughton and the results seemed to support the claims of clearly marked burials. A spot where human bone was visible on the surface within a circle of stones was chosen for excavation. The burial was soon found to have been disturbed so excavation shifted to another, similar, feature nearby. Here, a pit containing the burials of two adults, one male and one female, was uncovered in the coarse beach sand.

Initially, the skeleton of an adult female in an upright squatting position was uncovered (Burial 1). The legs were drawn up so that the heels were at the base of the pelvis. One arm was bent across the chest, the other was at the side (Fig. 3). A second burial (Burial 2) was found immediately alongside the first and within the same burial pit. The second burial belonged to an adult male. The burials were separated by two stones, each standing about 10-12 inches<sup>2</sup> high and about 6 inches wide. The male skeleton was laid flat, but with neck and skull and the knees elevated. The legs were flexed and the knees laid over to the right side. The left arm was alongside the body and the right arm was folded across the lower chest (Fig. 3). The skull had a rocker jaw and the teeth were all heavily worn and flat. At the base of the pit, immediately under the skeleton, there were three large flat stones. Each stone measured about 14 x 12 x 6 inches. Around the neck of the skeleton was a shark tooth necklace made up of 22 teeth (Plate 1).

The necklace is an unusual, but not unique, item. Three of the teeth were identified as being from mako shark (*Isurus oxyrinchus*) and the rest were identified as being from a small great white shark (*Carcharodon carcharias*). The teeth were identified by Mr J. Morland of the Dominion Museum. Burial 29 at Wairau Bar (S29/7 [P28/21] had a necklace of 38 units of *Carcharodon* teeth (Duff 1977:130-1, Fig. 14, Plates 4 & 5) and this seemed to confirm Cairns's conviction that the North Pararaki site was an early one. From the beginning, similarities with some of the Wairau Bar burials were noted. The possibility of close contact across Cook Strait was a matter of particular interest to Cairns. There is little reason, however, to believe that items such as shark tooth necklaces were confined to the early prehistoric period. A necklace of great white shark teeth is noted by Skinner (1974:90) from Karitane on the Otago

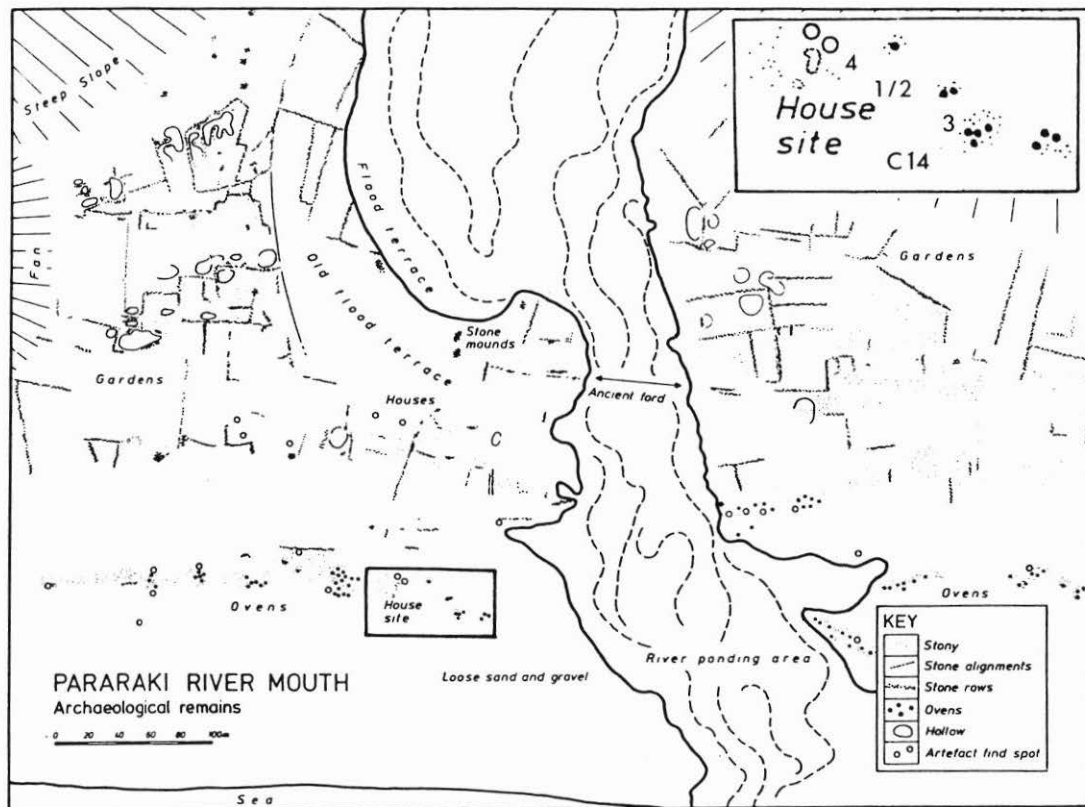


Figure 2. Archaeological features at the Pararaki River mouth. Site plan from Leach (1984:39). Inset top right shows approximate locations of Burials 1-4 and the material used for radiocarbon date NZ6965.

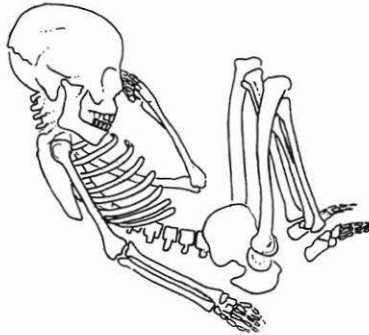
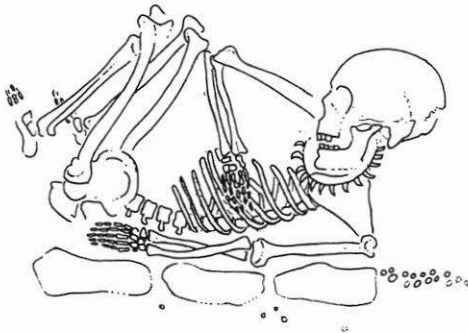


Figure 3. Burials (from top to bottom) 1, 2, and 3. Redrawn from Cairns Papers f88-070-18/13, Alexander Turnbull Library.

coast, where it was found with the skeletons of a child and an adult. Most evidence from the Karitane site (S155/1 [I43/1]) points to occupation in the late prehistoric period. There were general similarities between the North Pararaki burials and those at Wairau Bar, and the parallels were close on some points of detail, but at the time this was regarded as suggestive rather than conclusive.

## THE 1959 EXCAVATION

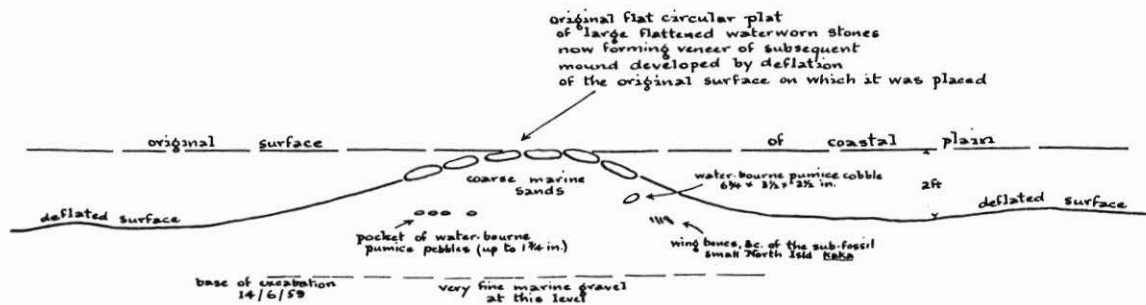
The results of the 1958 excavation encouraged greater interest in the site. Sue Davis (Assistant Ethnologist, Dominion Museum) and Win Mumford visited the site on 28 March 1959, completed a sketch plan, and filled in a Site Record Form. Meanwhile, a more detailed investigation was being planned. Cairns arranged for the site to be mapped. He assisted A.J. Geddes (N.Z. Forest Service) with the mapping on 28 May 1959. The completed map showed nine definite stone mounds or circles of stone and an L-shaped structure. Doubtful features were deliberately excluded from the plan, the intention being to add these later, after they had been investigated. The site was divided into two broad areas: the burial area itself, and an area containing patches of burnt stones. Although the recorded presence of burials was probably confined to the burial area as defined on the plan, patches of burnt stones were found right along the beach ridge, including the burial area. This can be confirmed by reference to the sketch plan by Davis and Mumford in 1959 and to the map by Otago University (Anderson, Prickett and Prickett n.d) a decade later. It has been further confirmed by observations at the site in July 1993.

The second investigation took place over the weekend of 13-14 June 1959. Eight people were involved, including three members of staff from the Dominion Museum and four locals. The participants were Dr Terry Barrow, Sue Davis, Frank O'Leary (Photographer, Dominion Museum), Leslie Adkin, Keith Cairns, Russell Broughton, John Greeks, and Kenny Rodden. Adkin was familiar with many of the Palliser Bay sites, having published a detailed discussion just a few years before (Adkin 1955). He was included in the party at the suggestion of Dr R.A. Falla, Director of the Dominion Museum.

The investigation began with the excavation of one of the more conspicuous mounds. Adkin has provided the most detailed description of these features. They were generally about 6 feet in diameter and stood about 18 inches to 2 feet above the surrounding surface. They were 'small, isolated, more or less circular patches (or plats<sup>3</sup>) of flat or flattish boulders in a single layer, practically all waterworn and deliberately placed in plats on the surface of the ground by human agency' (emphasis in original). Adkin did not offer an interpretation of the function of the plats. The plats had all been disturbed, but to varying degrees. Cairns sometimes referred to 'mounds' and sometimes to 'circles' and this suggests the features were far from uniform in appearance.

The excavation of the mound showed that it was formed of a single layer





4. Sketch section of stone-veneered mound (one of a considerable number) at Pararaki archaeological site (burial area), Eastern Tairāwhiti Bay.

Figure 4. Adkin's sketch section through the excavated mound.

5. Circular discs or plates (c. 6 ft in diameter) of large, flat, waterworn boulders (single layer) placed on original level surface, apparently with variable spacing and without any particular pattern, at burial area of the Paravakhi site. Purpose unknown.

— Diagrammatic Plan —



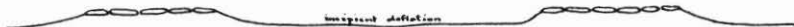
sandy flat



Postulated origin and development of stone-veneer mounds — in profile.



a. Circular artificial plate or discs of large flat stones on level even surface.



b. Deflation of unprotected parts of the sandy flat.



c. Continued deflation of unprotected areas causing marginal flat stones or plates to tilt downward all round perimeter.



d. Final production, by this process, of existing low sub-circular stone-veneer mounds.

Figure 5. Adkin's explanation of the development of mounds.

of stones and that the stones rested on clean, undisturbed sand. The bones of a small bird were found in the undisturbed sand and these were later identified by John Yaldwyn of the Dominion Museum as kaka (*Nestor meridionalis septentrionalis*). No burial was found and, as Adkin noted, it became clear that the low mounds did not invariably mark a human interment (Fig. 4). At this early stage in the investigation, Adkin was apparently still prepared to entertain the idea that some mounds might mark burials but later, as the evidence accumulated, he came to discount any specific association between the mounds and the burials.

Adkin thought that the form of the 'mounds' owed much to deflation (Fig. 5). He reasoned that the stones originally lay flat on a surface and that unprotected surfaces around were deflated, leaving the stones elevated above the surrounding surface. As deflation continued, the outer stones were undermined and tilted, gradually producing the low sub-circular stone-veneered mounds. This suggestion, that the form of the mounds owed much to deflation, remains plausible. Feeling that he would be usefully employed in a study of the geomorphology of the immediate area, Adkin began work on a profile of the ground surface at right angles to the coast with an abney level.

An L-shaped structure outlined by large waterworn stones was evident on the surface near the circle excavated. The structure was 21½ feet long and between 9½ and 13½ feet wide (Fig. 6, Plate 2). The waterworn stones were commonly about 15 x 9 x 5 inches in size. Some members of the party initially thought that this might be a very recent structure because of its unusual shape. Encouraged by Adkin, Cairns began investigating the interior. He soon uncovered a rectangle of large flat stones set on edge forming a hearth some 17½ x 15½ inches in size. The stones showed no sign of blackening by fire, nor was there any trace of charcoal within the hearth. All that was found were half a dozen dog teeth, in an advanced state of decomposition. The discovery of the hearth convinced all concerned that the L-shaped structure was definitely of Maori origin, its unusual shape notwithstanding.

Cairns (1971) was later to promote the idea that the structure had a religious function. He based his argument on its proximity to the burials, the unusual layout, the unusual use of stones around the perimeter, and the presence of dog teeth in the hearth. The last he interpreted as ritual objects. His case relied on ethnographic analogy. He noted that temporary structures were sometimes erected for the dying, a possibility also entertained by B.F. Leach (1979:83, see also Leach and Leach 1979b:210) to explain a set of postholes close to Burials A and B at the nearby Washpool midden site (N168/22 [S28/49]) at the mouth of the Makotukutuku River. In his unpublished papers, Cairns also noted Donne's discussion of a 'house of grief' (Donne 1927:60) - a temporary residence for relatives after the burial of a person. Cairns (1971) referred to the L-shaped structure as 'the house of the dead' and argued that the house and the hearth were 'associated with a sacred function', perhaps 'purification rites'. All such interpretations are, however, inevitably highly

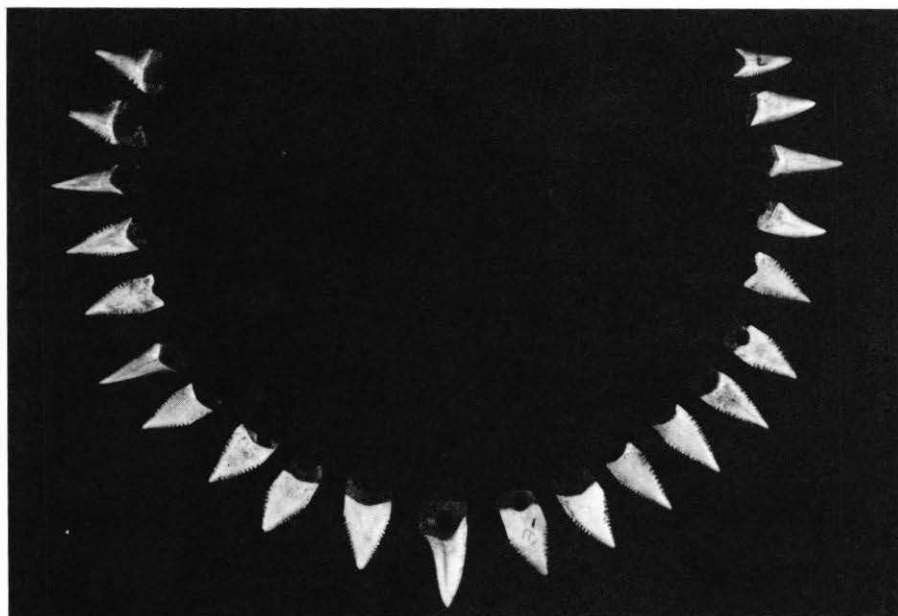


Plate 1. The shark tooth necklace from Burial 2. Photograph by F. O'Leary, Museum of New Zealand/Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington, negative no. B10661.

speculative.

Adkin had very different ideas about the L-shaped structure. He was not adverse to religious interpretations of unusual features (see, for example, Adkin 1955:465-471) but he interpreted the L-shaped structure simply as a domestic structure. B.F. Leach (1976:292) later reached a similar conclusion: he regarding the L-shaped structure as just one of a number of houses on the second and third beach ridges. While this interpretation does not explain all the unusual features, it has the advantage of being prosaic.

Adkin regarded the L-shaped structure as definitely later in time than the burials and therefore regarded its proximity to the burials as irrelevant. He argued that the house had been built on a deflated surface. According to his reconstruction of events, the house was later than the circular stone plats, which in turn post-dated the burials. Although he distinguished these events on geomorphological grounds, there is nothing in his interpretation which necessitated a long period of time between them. His other comments suggest he saw both the burials and the L-shaped house as belonging to much the same period. He thought the burials belonged to an early, but not the earliest, cultural group to inhabit New Zealand. The house, although later, had an unusual layout which indicated that it also belonged to much this same period.

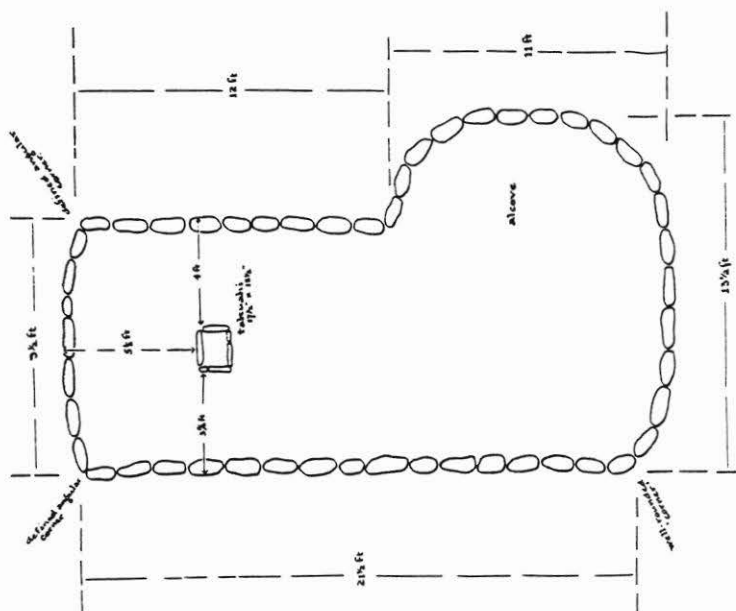


Plate 2. The house site. Figures, left to right, are: Keith Cairns, B. McLeod (a local resident), and Leslie Adkin. Photograph by F. O'Leary, Museum of New Zealand/Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington, negative no. A3307.

It is difficult now to disentangle the various elements which helped shape Adkin's views. His interpretation of New Zealand prehistory was clearly one element, along with his reconstruction of the geomorphology of the immediate area. Both were, by current day understandings, flawed. Adkin's views on New Zealand prehistory will be considered further below.

Adkin's study of the geomorphology of the immediate area led him to postulate a hypothetical original surface for the coastal platform, which he thought had been subsequently lowered by river erosion and deflation. He did

8. Ancient whare-site, of unique outline, defined by perimeter of water-worn boulders (single line as shown) of average size of 5" x 15" x 5" thick.



Tahuaiki made of six flat  
water-worn boulders  
4x4. No trace of charcoal  
or burning stains and the  
sand fill contained only several  
small unrecognised seeds of  
a grass which, however, was  
not Tahuaiki, but of the same  
as their characteristic shape.

Lengthening sides of  
the structure (right) for  
the alove, straight and  
parallel.

Figure 6. Adkin's plan of the house site

not recognise the presence of a succession of tectonically uplifted beach ridges: he regarded them as remnants of the original surface. While his overall reconstruction of the geomorphological setting of the North Pararaki site is untenable, wind-scour deflation was a major process affecting the North Pararaki site and his recognition of this was an important contribution to the investigation. His suggestion that the form of the stone features was partly shaped by deflation is particularly significant.

While Cairns was investigating the house, and Adkin was involved in his study of the environs, Rodden was test pitting within the burial area and had come upon a burial (Burial 3) unmarked by any surface evidence. On excavation, the skeleton was found to be flexed and leaning backwards (Fig. 3). The skeleton was that of an adult male. No grave goods were found. Immediately over the skull, but not in contact with it, was a single large stone. This burial was, therefore, similar to Burial F at the Washpool midden site (Leach and Leach 1979b:207). As with Burial 2, the skull had a rocker jaw and the teeth were all heavily worn.

For most of the participants, Rodden's discovery finally destroyed any idea that the mounds and the graves were associated. Faced with a mound without a burial, and a burial without a mound, Adkin argued that any association of mounds and burials was entirely fortuitous. Most of the party apparently agreed with this conclusion. While Adkin's dismissal of the idea of marked burials appears well founded, Cairns never accepted this view and continued to argue that some of the graves, at least, had been deliberately marked. He always retained the belief that the burials at North Pararaki 'were clearly marked by circles of stones' (Cairns 1986:253).

Broughton uncovered a burial that had been exposed on a previous occasion to show the group. That done, the burial was covered over and the 1959 investigation ended. Few details of Broughton's burial were recorded by Adkin, and Cairns does not refer to it at all. It is unlikely to have been one of the two burials excavated in 1958 as the location, as shown on Adkin's plan, does not match the location of Burials 1 and 2 as shown on the Geddes and Cairns plan. The burial lay between Burial 3 (Fig. 2) and the Pararaki River. Adkin noted that, as with Burial 3, there had been no mound marking the location of Broughton's burial. The two burials which had been exposed were covered over again, but Adkin retained the skulls for further study.

Adkin compared three skulls from North Pararaki (Burials 2 and 3 and Broughton's burial) with those he had studied in the Horowhenua and concluded that the 'Pararaki series belongs to a somewhat later blended group, due to intermingling of a subsequent immigration with the original early stock'. The analysis was based on skull form. Adkin's model of New Zealand prehistory involved the successive immigration of at least three different groups over a period of 2000 years. The first immigrants were Waitaha, who came in two separate waves. They were followed by Ngatimamoe and then Fleet Maori

(Adkin 1952). The North Pararaki site was seen as evidence of occupation by late Waitaha. Adkin (1955) had earlier identified Waitaha as the builders of the stone walls in Palliser Bay. Adkin's model of New Zealand prehistory attracted much criticism (see Golson 1960) and was soon entirely eclipsed by Golson's two phase model.

## SUBSEQUENT INVESTIGATIONS

Over the years, Cairns continued to pay irregular visits to the North Pararaki site. He was present when a party of about 40 people visited the site on 7 January 1964 in the course of a geology fieldtrip. A member of the party, Peter Cameron, found an amulet made of whale ivory on the surface. Cairns investigated the spot and uncovered a skeleton in a semi-supine position with knees drawn up to the chest. The burial (Burial 4) was partially exposed, but not otherwise disturbed, and was then covered over. The skeleton was that of an adult but the sex was not recorded. Cairns's notes on the discovery formed the basis for an unattributed article in the *Wairarapa Times-Age* of 23 January 1964, and the artefact was depicted both there and in Cairns's (1971) article. The burial was exposed in either 1967 or 1968 for photographing and was then again covered over.

Other visitors during these years saw evidence of burials being uncovered by erosion. B.F. Leach (1976:85) reports that in 1966 the area was littered with skeletal material and burial pits could be seen in the riverbank.

There was a limited excavation at North Pararaki in January 1968 when a 1 x 1 metre square was laid out to examine a charcoal-stained sand layer lying between known burials. A date was subsequently obtained on the charcoal (Cairns 1986).

The Wahine storm of 1968 stripped material off the surface of the site, destroying some of what remained (B.F. Leach 1976:85). A burial was found exposed near the river edge when Cairns visited the site on 27 December 1970. A further small excavation followed in January 1973 to obtain further material for dating but nothing came of this.

The author visited the site on 6 July 1993. There was no difficulty in identifying a number of features recorded on the map accompanying the report by Anderson, Prickett and Prickett (n.d.) and on the Davis/Mumford sketch plan which forms part of the Site Record Form. Some of the deflated scatters of burnt stone are apparently now rather more diffuse than in earlier years but they remain recognisable. Some fragments of bone are evident on the surface here and there but the one identifiable bone was animal and not human. The L-shaped house could still be seen and it retains its original shape, size, and alignment, although fewer of the original stones are still in place, as is to be expected. A comparison of the 1959 Dominion Museum photograph with the



present remnants suggests that a few stones have been added since that time in order to preserve the outline.

The site has been badly damaged by wind, river, and coastal erosion over the last 40 years but is currently reasonably stable. The scarp at the front of the beach ridge has not moved significantly in the last twenty years. In the late 1950s there were remnants of wind blown sand overlying the beach ridge and forming low hillocks. The last remnants of these were probably blown away in the 1960s. Vegetation was sparse in the late 1950s but this has changed in the last twenty years. Today the top of the beach ridge is still bare in places but there is now a growing cover of spinifex. The rear of the ridge and the hollow behind has a grass cover with clumps of rushes.

## ANTIQUITY

The only radiocarbon date obtained from the North Pararaki site was reported by Cairns (1986). This date, as reported here, is recalculated by the Radiocarbon Laboratory in accordance with their current procedures:

<i>Lab Number:</i>	NZ6965
<i>Conventional age (years b.p.):</i>	714±37
<i>Calibrated age, 95% confidence interval (years AD):</i>	1262 - 1319 66%
	1345 - 1391 29%
<i>δC13:</i>	-24.70
<i>Material:</i>	Unidentified charcoal

In his unpublished manuscripts, and in his 1986 publication, Cairns argued that there were grounds for treating all the features at the North Pararaki site as substantially belonging to one period. Because the 1968 sample was from a location between burials and because both the burials and the charcoal shared a common basal layer, Cairns argued that the events were close in time. Even assuming Cairns is right about all features belonging to one period (and this need only be interpreted very loosely), the date provides only a maximum age for the burials as the charcoal is unidentified and may be, given the coastal setting, from driftwood from mature forest trees. At best, the date suggests occupation in the 14th century **or later**.

Three radiocarbon dates (NZ1311-1313) are available from the stone rows (N168/41 [S28/68]) on the north side of the Pararaki River (H.M. Leach 1976, 1979). These provide additional evidence about the antiquity of settlement in the vicinity. The dates are all on unidentified charcoal from horticultural features and for these reasons they need to be treated with caution (Anderson 1991:785). The results calibrated at 95% confidence interval are 1229-1431 AD (NZ1311),

1127-1420 AD (NZ1312) and 1181-1422 AD (NZ1313) (Anderson 1991:771). The most that can be said on the basis of these dates is that the occupation belongs to the 12th century **or later**.

Dates from the Washpool midden site also need to be considered in discussing the age of the North Pararaki site because of the similarities between the two (B.F. Leach 1976:282). B.F. Leach (1976, 1979) places the burials at the Washpool midden site in Level I, which is dated to the 12th or 13th centuries. In his review of the chronology of the settlement of New Zealand, Anderson (1991:786) suggests that the settlement of Palliser Bay actually began about the 14th century. He notes that some aspects of the interpretation of the Washpool midden site are open to question and that if the Level I and II occupations 'are collapsed into one then most dates indicate 14th or 15th century occupation.' Employing Anderson's chronology, and assuming a rough contemporaneity with the burials at the Washpool midden site, the North Pararaki burials would probably date from the early part of the Palliser Bay sequence in the 14th or 15th centuries AD.

## DISCUSSION

There is a detailed discussion of the burial positions of five burials from the Washpool midden site (Leach and Leach 1979b). There is a reasonable level of detail about four burials from North Pararaki, so some comparisons are possible. Taking the two groups as a whole, most of the burials are primary burials, the exception being Burial A at Washpool. Most of the nine were flexed burials, the exception being Burial B at Washpool. No extended burials are known from North Pararaki but this may be due to the haphazard sampling. A number of the nine burials, notably F at Washpool and all four of the burials at North Pararaki, were in deep pits scooped in the sand. The remainder were in shallow pits or scoops. The use of large waterworn stones in the burial pits is evident at both Washpool and North Pararaki. The presence of two burials in one subdivided pit (Burials 1 and 2 at North Pararaki) has not been recorded before in Palliser Bay. Assuming a rough contemporaneity with Washpool, North Pararaki confirms the picture of considerable variation in burial positions in early Palliser Bay sites (Leach and Leach 1979b).

North Pararaki may be another instance of the burial of dead in or close to settlements (Davidson 1984:173). There is evidence of occupation both within the burial area and immediately adjacent. Cairns clearly believed that much of the occupation evidence was more or less contemporaneous, and even Adkin's interpretation does not really exclude this possibility.

## CONCLUSION

There is no good evidence for Cairns's claim that the burials at North Pararaki were marked by circles or mounds of stone. Adkin's view that the association was fortuitous is supported by a review of the results of the Dominion Museum excavations in 1958 and 1959.

There is better evidence to support Cairns's view that the North Pararaki site once contained important evidence relating to the early settlement of the Wairarapa and the wider Cook Strait area. However, natural erosion and fossicking in the 1950s and 1960s has undoubtedly badly damaged the site. This is the tragedy of North Pararaki.

The North Pararaki burials have some similarities with those at the Washpool midden site and both probably belong to much the same period of around the 14th or 15th century AD. It is suggested that North Pararaki was comparable in terms of setting, antiquity, and content, to the Washpool midden site.

## ENDNOTES

1. Later the National Museum, and currently the Museum of New Zealand/Te Papa Tongarewa.
2. As imperial measurements were in use at the time of the investigations, they have been retained in the text. To convert feet and inches to centimetres multiply inches by 2.54, and feet by 30.48.
3. A plat is defined by the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* as a 'flat surface or thing.'

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**TABLE 1. Some details of burials from North Pararaki and Washpool midden site.**

<b>Burial Position</b>	<b>Age/ Sex</b>	<b>Grave Goods</b>	<b>Year Excavated</b>
North Pararaki burials			
1	Upright squatting Adult/f	n	1958
2	Supine, legs flexed. Adult/m	y	1958
3	Semi-supine, legs flexed Adult/m	n	1959
4	Semi-supine, legs flexed Adult/?	y	1964

Washpool midden site (after Leach and Leach 1979)

A	Bundle Adult/f	y	1970
B	Extended prone Adult/m	y	1970
C	On side, legs flexed Child/?	y	1970
E	On side, legs flexed Adult/f	n	1970
F	Upright squatting Adult/m	y	1970