

## **NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER**



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## EXCAVATIONS ON MOUNT ROSKILL

By Wilfred Shawcross

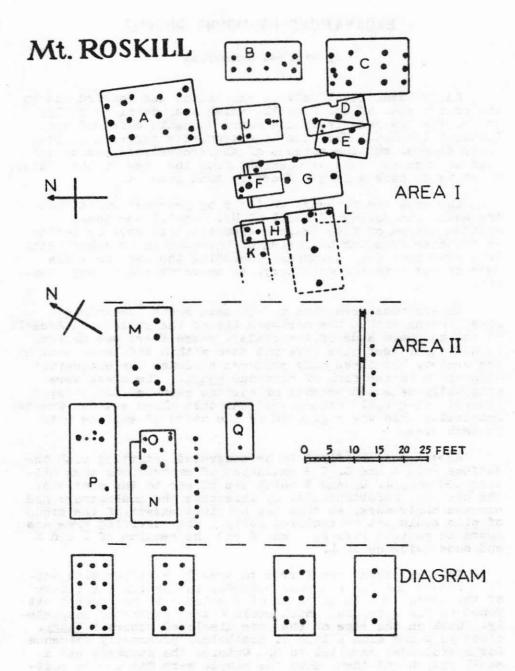
An archaeological salvage excavation was carried out on the crater area of Mt. Roskill, which was, until recently, one of the few relatively undamaged volcanic cones of the Auckland Isthmus. The site is extensively terraced on its outer slopes, but the purpose of the excavations was to salvage as much evidence as possible from the area of the crater, which is to have a large reservoir sunk into it.

The work was financed entirely by generous gifts from the Mayor and Borough Council of Mt. Roskill and these enabled a team of five trained excavators to work full-time at the site from the beginning of November to December 12th. They also provided equipment, including the use for a few days of earth-moving machinery, an operator and a very useful hut.

Excavations were made in two main areas (see plans), Area I being within the northern lip of the crater and Area II on the southern side of the crater, where there was no lip. In addition, test pits were put down within the level area of the crater, but these only produced evidence for extensive occupation in the form of numerous <a href="https://doi.org/10.1001/journal.org/10.1001/j

Area I was the first to be excavated, starting with the surface Pits A and C. The extension of excavations then disclosed Pits B, J, D, and E which are closer to the centre of the crater. Unfortunately, by this time the contractors had started their work, so that the original extent of the group of pits could not be explored fully. The surviving area was found to contain Pits F, G and H and the remains of I and K and some evidence of L.

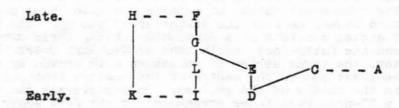
Work was then transferred to Area II starting with surface Pits M and N. A trench extended in towards the centre of the crater disclosed parts of P which was the largest pit found on the site, but which could not be excavated completely. Work on the edge of the cone disclosed numerous hangi, close to M and also a line of postholes, presumably evidence for a stockade, parallel to N. Outside the stockade was a small pit, Q and then, down the slope, were found more postholes and signs of other wood-work which would seem to be



connected with stockades, built on a narrow platform.

The excavations have revealed a wide variety of pits, including a number of posthole arrangements which seem to fall into four basic groups, tentatively suggested in the Diagram. There is also a very interesting buttressed Pit D which may be related to those found in the Skipper's Ridge excavations at Opito by Ham. Parker. Another important fact arising out of these excavations was that by careful excavation it is possible to establish a sequence, showing which pits were dug into the fills of others. Where there is no direct physical contact between pits it would also seem legitimate to correlate pits on typological grounds, though this method can never be relied upon to the extent that stratigraphy can.

## Suggested Sequence



Notes: Those pits connected by a broken line show a similarity of either typology or alignment.

It is possible that D and E are in fact even earlier. Similarly, C and A may be the latest in the series, because they, unlike the other pits, were not filled in and levelled after use.

The importance of this sequence will only ampear when more comparable sites have been excavated. As yet, there is no evidence for the period of time represented at Mt. Roskill; all that is known is that the area was abandoned when visited by the first European observers.

The writer wishes to acknowledge Mr. L.M. Groube, upon whose records of the excavation this article is based.