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FIELDWORK AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

NORTHLAND

James Robinson had a nasty surprise on New Year's day when Garry Law, Stuart Park and John Coster all turned up for the first of his archaeological tours of excavations at Waipu in Northland. Everyone was polite and James acquitted himself admirably. The excavations, undertaken by James, Adrienne Slocombe and Simon Best for the Waipu Centennial Trust Board, were part of the celebrations of the Scottish/Nova Scotian settlement's 150th anniversary.

John Coster

AUCKLAND

The Auckland University annual field school was this year led by Melinda Allen. Hans-Dieter Bader summed up the experience as absolutely great, not only because of the setting, the fantastic west coast, but technically. Ways were finally found to merge digital and non-digital documentation that gave the best of both worlds.

Melinda writes :”The Department of Anthropology University of Auckland carried out a field school at Tauroa Point, Ahipara, Northland between February 8 and 23. They were warmly hosted by the Kaitaia Branch of the Department of Conservation, Roma Marae, Korou Kore Marare, Wainui Marae, and the Tauroa Whanau. Two localities were investigated where cultural materials are eroding from coastal dunes and under threat from vehicular traffic. A variety of techniques were used in an effort to document the cultural and natural features of the area, including not only traditional mapping and excavation, but also intensive surface collections, resistivity, conductivity and magnetometry. The cultural materials appear to date between 600 and 200 years in age and at least three distinct occupations were sampled. One of these was an archaic occupation previously tested and dated by James Robinson and others. Remains of two moa species were recovered from surface contexts near to this Archaic occupation. The students will analyse the recovered materials over the course of the next few months. Funds have been secured to develop a web page on the field school findings and a grant for further field work and dating is under consideration. Melinda Allen was ably assisted in the field by Hans Bader and Rod Wallace. The joint efforts of Sam Ngawhika and Trish Ellis made for a culinary feast that will go down in field school history!”

Robert Brassey, at the Auckland Regional Council's Heritage Department reports: "Sarah Ross returns from maternity leave on March 3, and will be job sharing on a part time basis with Vanessa Tanner. Jonathon Carpenter, who was with the Heritage Department over summer, is now working on a contract in American Samoa with Greg Walter.

In December ARC staff carried out an archaeological survey of the defence land and coastal environment at the end of the Whangaparaoa Peninsula as part of a co-operative management arrangement with the Navy. The ARC is working with DOC and members of MAANZ and the Western Underwater Club to develop a volunteer-based shipwreck recording/monitoring programme in the Auckland Region. A training day was held on foreshore wrecks on Rangitoto in December, and once some OSH issues are resolved it is hoped to start recording underwater wrecks around Tiritiri Matangi Island in the area proposed for a marine reserve.

ARC Environment Court Appeal 1645/98: The objective of this appeal (and eight years of RMA district plan submissions, hearings and meetings) has been to link the remnants of Wiri Mountain (R11/32) and the associated stonefields (R11/1188), including the Wiri Lava Cave reserve and wahi tapu areas, to protect them from further quarrying, and promote good conservation management as a composite heritage landscape. At the end of 2002, the President of NZAA, Garry Law, wrote to the Director of ARC Heritage, urging the Council to pursue the protection a larger area of relatively unquarried archaeological landscape at Wiri Mountain. Supportive correspondence was also received from the NZHPT and the Geological Society of NZ seeking the same objectives. We are happy to report, following a series of recent discussions and meetings at political and officer levels, further quarrying at Wiri is not intended, but minimal rehabilitation works will be undertaken to ensure adequate stabilisation of the quarry face. Work is proceeding on surveying the agreed boundary line and thought is being given to appropriate scheduling in the Manukau City District Plan and future conservation management."

Archaeological investigations at the Omaha Sandspit are reaching the final stages of report preparation. Rod Clough says the C14 dates from both seasons reveal a similar date range between 1400 and 1700 AD. Stratigraphic differences between the midden were observed, with some pre and some post-dating buried land surfaces. In general, they are earlier than expected and it was a surprise that none fell into the 'modern' period as oral traditions and the nature of the midden had led us to expect at least some recent dates. The early dates are

surprising given both the size of the midden (up to 20 m or more in diameter and 600 mm of dense shell) and the virtual absence of artefacts (perhaps 10 in 150 sites). However, these finds are in accord with a very similar pattern emerging from other regions such as Orewa to the south or Matarangi on the Coromandel peninsula, and highlight the importance of shellfish in the early Classic economy. All dates were on shell and the Radiocarbon Laboratory has offered to run additional samples on charcoal to determine if there is any 'old carbon' effect from the limestones which surround the Whangateau Harbour adjacent to the sandspit.

Kath Prickett, Auckland War Memorial Museum

BAY OF PLENTY

The Trust's Bay of Plenty Project, assisted by Environment Bay of Plenty's environmental enhancement fund, to update local information for its Register of historic places and areas is nearing completion. Shirley Arabin has been travelling throughout the region gathering information from Katikati to Raukokore.

Shirley will soon be assisting Ken Phillips with the historic component of another project sponsored by the Environmental Enhancement Fund. Ken is creating an inventory of pre and post-European archaeological sites within Tauranga's CBD, from historic records, photographs and maps. Tauranga District Council has been awarded the grant to define archaeological site boundaries and undertake archaeological surveys of parts of the district that are under pressure for development.

This work includes a survey of Mauao ("The Mount"), which was recently engulfed in a fire that destroyed most of the vegetation on north-western slopes, from the base track to the summit. Council has plans to revegetate Mauao, but not until an archaeological survey is completed by Ken Phillips. Mauao has up to 45,000 visitors a month and there is constant pressure for new tracks to be developed.

Ray Hooker has been kept busy with forest and subdivision work in the Bay of Plenty. Ray is also working on a project with the mining company, Waihi Gold, who are planning to remove damaging vegetation from around the in-ground ore-roasting kilns on Union Hill. In the long-term it is hoped that a heritage walkway will be developed allowing the public greater access to the kilns and other gold mining sites on Union Hill.

At the end of last year Phil Moore completed a damage assessment report for a recorded midden site at Waihi Beach that was exposed by earthworks for Council's new stormwater system (despite repeated warnings from the NZ Historic Places Trust!). By the time you read this a meeting with Western Bay of Plenty's CEO will have hopefully resolved this.

Phil has also been working on the protection of an historic mine adit in the Coromandel. Repairs to a washout on Driving Creek Road, near Coromandel Town, exposed an adit associated with the "Conquering Hero" mine, possibly dating back to the 1870s. A concrete box culvert was placed over the adit portal to protect it from further collapse. The recording of this site highlights the limited information we have on old mine workings in the Driving Creek/Kapanga area.

Rachel Darmody, NZHPT, Tauranga

TARANAKI

Transit, in the course of curve correction, damaged St. Patricks Redoubt between Omata and Oakura. Worked was stopped and following an assessment an authority issued from NZHPT. Michael and Anita Sutton undertook a salvage excavation of part of the ditch and the gateway into the redoubt.

The current property boom in Taranaki is causing some concern as more and more of the coastal area is being subdivided. A meeting is proposed between staff from the Wellington Regional Office, NZHPT, and Planning Staff, STDC, so that archaeological concerns about these subdivisions can be discussed.

Kelvin Day, Puke Ariki

WELLINGTON

Bruce McFadgen has retired from the Department of Conservation and has taken up a year-long Stout Fellowship at Victoria University of Wellington, to work on a book on the impact of natural catastrophes in New Zealand prehistory.

A number of DOC Science & Research Staff including Paul Dingwall, Kevin Jones, and Chris Edkins, were involved in an expedition in February to the Auckland Islands. A number of archaeologists from other parts of New Zealand also joined the party on the islands.

On 24 January 2003 a digger was used to investigate the fill of the 1890s Botanic Gardens gun pit. A trophy gun (German, WWI) was thought to have been buried in the vicinity in 1942. Underground radar had earlier thrown up some possible 'hits' in the fill of the gun pit although one of them always looked exactly right

as the location of the pivot mount of the 1890s gun emplacement rather than the remains of a later trophy gun. The dig was organised by the Department of Conservation in conjunction with Wellington City Council and a private sponsor. The principal objective was to locate, and if found recover, any remains of a trophy gun buried there and not to damage the gun pit in the process. As the rough dimensions of the gun pit were known, trenches were dug to an appropriate depth by the digger and then a spade were used to locate the gun platform and floor of the gun pit. No evidence of a trophy gun was found. As the trophy gun was buried in 1942 and the fill in the gun pit was deposited post-1900, no NZ Historic Places Trust permit was required.

A recent DOC historic resources publication of note is Petchey (2002) on *Archaeological survey of the Arrow River and Macetown, Otago*.

Tony Batley has resigned as filekeeper for the Inland Patea District after more than three decades of service in that position. The file is now held by the Hawke's Bay filekeeper. A recent count of date of last reported visit from CINZAS shows that 20% of records in the Site Recording Scheme have reported visits in the years 1993-2002, 26% reported visits in the years 1983-1992, and 42% reported visits in the years 1973-1982.

Tony Walton, DOC, Wellington

OCEANIA

Archaeologists from Texas A&M University have begun studies of historic and prehistoric sites in American Samoa. They began with a six-week evaluation of the cultural resources in the A'asu Valley, western Tutuila, during May and June of 2002. The principal goal of last year's study was to assess the potential of the site, and by extension the more remote northwestern shores of Tutuila, to yield information to answer significant questions concerning the cultural and ecological history and prehistory of Samoa. A'asu is the site of one of the more famous contact events from the European period of discovery in the South Pacific. It is at this site that Samoans and French explorers, lead by La Pérouse, clashed resulting in the deaths of 12 Frenchman and an unknown number of Samoans. Excavation yielded a variety of historic finds and stone tools. A radiocarbon date of 710±40 BP on the deepest levels places the bulk of the occupation in the aceramic period of Samoan prehistory. However, it is yet unclear whether unexcavated strata will reveal a more ancient occupation. In 2003 investigations at A'asu will be continued to address this question, and efforts will be expanded to include other sites that might yield a deep glimpse into Polynesian prehistory. Samoa is considered by many archaeologists to be part of the homeland of ancestral Polynesian culture.

Frederic Pearl, Maritime Studies, Texas A&M University at Galveston