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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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 FURTHER HEAPHY RIVER EXCAVATIONS

O.R. Wilkes and R.J. Scarlett

A further three weeks' excavation has been carried out at the Heaphy River moa-hunter site since the previous report (Wilkes, Scarlett and Boraman 1963). The chief feature of this excavation was the discovery of a further two paved areas.

Pavement 2 was about 9 feet across and of roughly triangular shape. Pavement 3 was 5 feet across and of no particular shape. Both lacked the raised kerb found on the first pavement. From the abundance of flakes and abraders around these pavements it appears that they served as workshop areas, and the paving may have served to keep the workers and their materials off the West Coast mud, which, judging by our wet weather experiences, would have been ubiquitous. Pavement 1 seemed to be devoted mainly to woodworking, and Pavements 2 and 3 to the manufacture of minnow shanks and to a lesser degree, to woodworking.

A C 14 dating of 1518^T-70 A.D. has been obtained from the Institute of Nuclear Sciences. This confirms the impression obtained while collecting sub-fossil moa from local caves that Anomalopteryx must have survived until fairly recent times. It is interesting to note that the obsidian collection is of 100% yellow-green translucency in contrast to the earlier (.1150AD) Wairau Bar collection which is 87% yellow green.

A full report on these excavations has been prepared for publication in the Records of the Canterbury Museum.

Reference:

Wilkes, O.R., Scarlett, R.J., and Boraman, G. 1963. Two Moa-hunter sites in North West Nelson. N.Z.A.A. Newsletter 6 (2) p.88.

References to 'Further Work at South Bay':

Fomison, T. 1963 "Excavations at South Bay, Kaikoura." NWESLETTER Vol.6, no. 2 page 100.

Scarlett, R. 1963 "Comments on 'Excavations at South Bay, Kaikoura!'" NEWSLETTER Vol 6. no.3 page 159.

FURTHER WORK AT SOUTH BAY

S 49/43

O.R. Wilkes

INTRODUCTION:

Previous excavation at South Bay, Kaikoura, was carried out under the threat of bulldozing (Fomison 1963, Scarlett 63). This report is based on further work carried out by members of the Canterbury Museum Archaeological Society and a small party of pupils from Christ's College Secondary School.

SURFACE COLLECTION AND LOCAL COLLECTIONS:

A surface collection was made from the bulldozed area and local residents' collections were examined. Twentyfour greenstone adzes were seen, of which twelve were notable for having the cutting edge oblique to the long axis of the adze - presumably a consequence of the makers reluctance to flake the greenstone to shape before commencing to abrade the cutting edge. Nineteen argillite adzes were seen, some definitely of moa-hunter origin.

RENKIE PROPERTY EXCAVATION:

On the invitation of the owner we examined a bulldozed cut and sank three 6 ft. squares. These revealed very severe European disturbance and so work was abandoned. Reports by both owners of a melanised layer about 5 feet deep here tie up with the occasional finds of Moa-hunter type adzes in this area. Although we did not locate this moa-hunter layer ourselves it is apparently quite widespread and the assignment of it to a settlement phase by Fomison (1963 P. 102) is unjustified. Enquiries amongst both owners and examination of ditches etc., showed that the occupation layer fades away not far to the west of this excavation.

KEITHLEY PROPERTY EXCAVATION:

Three squares were opened up south-east of the 1962 excavation. We are indebted to Mr. Ron Keithley for permission to excavate and for the use of a bach.

The squares were laid out in one of the few un-bulldozed patches left. Unfortunately the solid bedrock was not far beneath ground level and the occupation layer was very confused. Three postholes in line and each about 12 inches in diameter, spaced 6 inches and 24 inches apart may be part of some sort of palisade. Several portions of fish-hooks were found.

RAISED RIM PIT EXCAVATION:

The only evidence of topographic modification on S49/43 is a row of raised rim pits on the inland edge of the site. When excavation was initiated on one of these we expected that the pit would prove to be contemporaneous with the main occupation layer of the site. However, it was found that the main occupation layer continued up to the rim and formed most of the fill.

Notable features were:-

- (a) the stepped floor
- (b) the complicated wall suggesting two periods of use
- (c) the lack of a rational postholes pattern
- (d) the presence of a sort of gutter outside the rim, perhaps to carry water from the eaves
- (e) the two deep cache (?) holes
- (f) a wall posthole and
- (g) the absence of a well defined hearth.

Of all these features only (f) and (g) are shared with the supposed habitation pits at Pari Whakatau Pa some distance to the South. (Duff 1961) Of the substantial amount of artifactual material recovered only one piece, a toggle of mollymawk humerus found in the bottom of one of the deep cache holes could be definitely associated with the pit.

MIDDEN ANALYSIS:

Midden analysis has not been completed but the following figures, an aggregate for most of the squares excavated so far, are of interest. They represent the bone material recovered during excavation.

Seal and possibly porpoise et c.	gms 285.0
Dog	845.5
Rat	22.5
Bird	1108.0
Whale	173.5
Moa (all from one oven)	86.5

A few dog faeces were collected which on preliminary examination seem to consist largely of fish bone. Most likely South Bay was able to support a large population of dogs because of its predominantly fishing economy. A further deduction is that the presence of those dogs invalidates a midden analysis for the purpose of working out the absolute diet of the sites inhabitants. The relatively large quantity of bird bone is composed in large part of albatros and mollymawk. A quantitative analysis of molluscon material, of far greater bulk than the bone, has yet to be attempted. It was debatable whether a moderate quantity of broken, often burnt human bone, should be included as midden.

FLAKE COLLECTIONS:

Stone flakes were not abundant but the following collection was made:-

(1) White Chert

This is abundant as nodules and veins in the Amuri limestone in the immediate vicinity of the site. It is very poor material for flaking purposes and large quantities were apparently broken down on the site to produce a few useable flakes. 5432 gms of waste chert were found besides

293 useable points and 51 useable edges, most of which showed little use if any.

(2) Grey Chert

This is obtained from the Amuri limestone a few miles north-east of South Bay. It possesses good flaking properties 267 reject flakes and six used flakes were collected.

(3) Other Cherts

From various local outcrops of Amuri limestone: 149 flakes.

(4) Obsidian

20 flakes with a yellow-green translucency (Mayor Island) 59 with grey translucency (Taupo), and 4 indeterminate were found. This Mayor Island/Taupo ratio is in contrast to the counts for earlier sites, e.g. Wairau Bar.

(5) Argillites

22 flakes without and 12 with hammerdressing, abrasion or polish were collected. This is a remarkably small quantity compared with moa-hunter sites in the Northern half of the South Island, and reflects the reliance placed on greenstone.

(6) Orthoquartzite

One flake of an orthoquartzite from South Canterbury was found.

(7) Greenstone

Only six flakes were found despite the large number of greenstone adzes from this site, showing that adzes were fashioned almost entirely by sawing rather than by flaking.

THE MAIN POINTS:

Although no conclusion can be made until further work is done at South Bay a summary of the main points is interesting:-

1. Some definite moa-hunter adzes have come from South Bay. The occupation layer is apparently quite widespread and the assignment to it of a settlement phase by Fomison (1963 p.102) is unjustified.
2. The pit excavation proved that the raised rim pit was in use before the main occupation layer was built up and it is suggested that there were two periods of use.
3. Work on midden analysis is continuing but already some results can be seen. The large Dog population is probably due to the main occupation, that of fishing.

4. An unusually large amount of Taupo type obsidian has been found compared with other sites in the Northern half of the South Island, the ratio of Taupo type to Mayor Island type being 3:1.
5. Greenstone adzes seem to be fashioned almost entirely by sawing rather than by flaking.

Finally, the Author would like to thank all those who made the excavations at South Bay possible, from land owners to the actual diggers, and hope that they gained as much pleasure from the experience as the Author.

A STONE MAORI WHARF IN THE NELSON DISTRICT

C.D. Northcroft and B.J. Bennett

Last Easter when the Authors were site surveying in the Nelson district a stone Maori wharf was found which caused considerable interest. The site which was found on the south-west corner of Pepin Island, (S.14, 776424 grid ref.) was pointed out to us by Mr. C.J. Stuart who owns the Island together with his son-in-law, Mr. Tindall.

The wharf or landing place is composed of pieces of rock placed close together to form a structure approximately two feet high by seven feet in width and today about twenty feet long. When it was built it would have been twice as long but much damage has been done by people looking "for Maori things". The remains of the destroyed end of the wharf or landing place can still be seen though most of the height of the structure has been considerably altered.

Mr. Stuart told us that when he was a boy, forty years ago, the site was in almost perfect condition and his Grandfather apparently saw Maoris unloading firewood from their canoes at this spot.

The wharf lies on estuarine mud about thirty yards from the present day main channel and is unlike most European wharves in that it lies lengthwise along the shoreline.

The Authors would be interested to hear of any other such structures, for as far as we know this is the only one known still to be found. Another structure of this type known was a stone embankment at Auckland Point Nelson which has long been destroyed.