



NEW ZEALAND
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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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Wheritoa

Commercial sand operations at the southern end of this beach have destroyed many sites, and threaten the destruction of more, including a number belonging to the Archaic phase. One working floor, (Site N 53/4) not yet disturbed by these operations, has produced a wide range of material including dog, rat, fish, and moa bone along with a variety of shells. The artefactual assemblage has included broken adzes, drills, worked pumice, sandstone files, backed obsidian knives, broken fishhooks, and hooks in process of manufacture as well as the usual run of worked flakes.

Whangamata

The most disturbed of these beach sites is in the vicinity of the wharf at Whangamata Harbour, known locally as the "port". Roading and parking improvements coupled with holiday activities have largely obliterated what was once an extensive area of midden. Nevertheless a smaller but similar range of artefacts and faunal material like that at Wheritoa has been recovered and preserved.

Reference

- (1) Green R.C. 1959. "A Survey of Sites Along the Coromandel Coast". N.Z. Arch. Assn. Newsletter. Vol.2. No.2. p20-25.

OPITO BEACH: TWO SITES

By D. Trower

The following brief description is of two restricted excavations carried out at Opito Beach, Coromandel Peninsula, from 13th to 14th January, 1962. In both cases the sites were situated in sand dunes sloping on to the beach itself. Figure 1 illustrates some of the artefacts recovered.

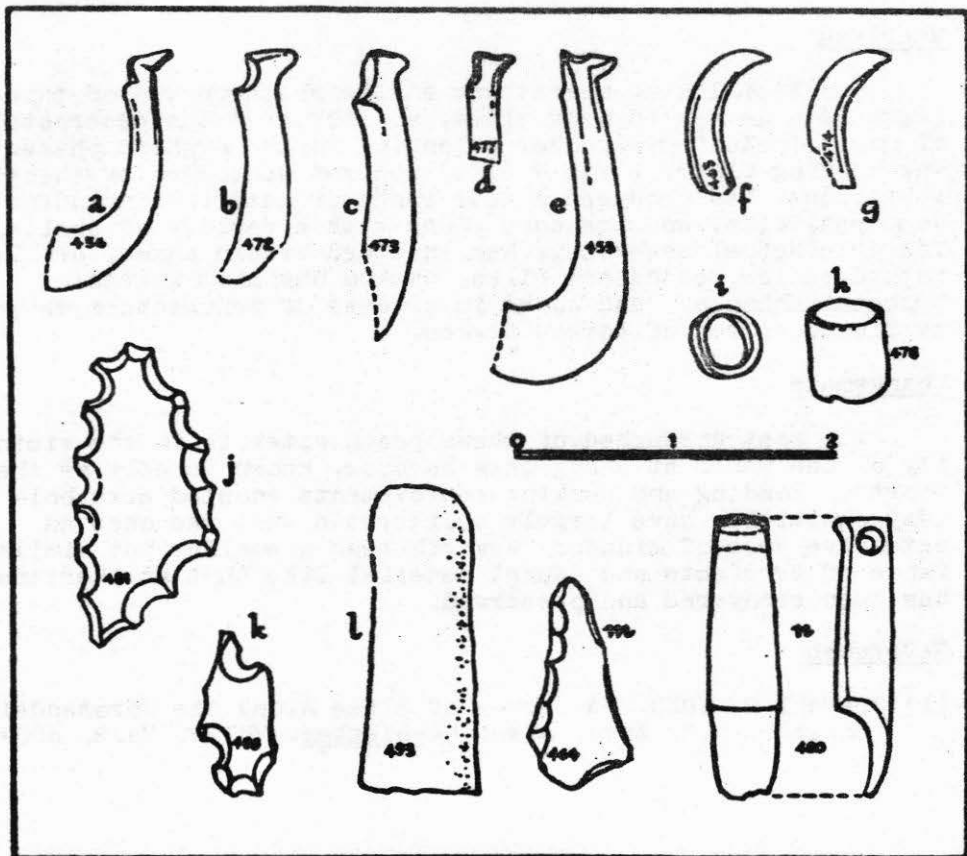


Figure 1.

Site N40/3

The site is situated towards the northern end of the beach, approximately 300 yards north from the mouth of Skipper's Creek. There were no surface indications of past habitation, due to the drifting sand cover which was sparsely vegetated with spinifex grass. However, the potential of this site as a source of Archaic artefacts had already been indicated by the recovery of a complete bone fishhook a few days previously and by artefacts recovered from the adjacent beach frontage by R. Jolly.

An area 9 feet by 3 feet was marked out in 3 foot squares. During excavation no definite occupation level emerged. Artefacts were scattered throughout with a concentration in pockets of darker and damper sand. These isolated pockets

Table 1.

Materials Recovered From Excavations at Onito Beach

Artefacts	Site N40/1	Site N40/3
Obsidian flakes	2 Iaupe? (not Mayor Is.)	2 Mayor Is.
Adze chip with polished surface		1 dark basalt, not local
Quartzite flake		1 (from hammerstone?)
Local basalt flakes less than 4mm sq. less than 6mm sq. waste core	(See report of Jolly and Green in this issue)	6 all of very fine-grained homogeneous 2 local basalt outcropping farther down beach
Chalcedony waste flakes		3
Chert waste flakes		34 mostly small and no signs of utilisation
Sandstone files	1 oval section (l)*	2 oval section
Sandstone abrader		1 small broken slab
Piercing tools or drills	1 fossilised wood	2 chalcedony (m)* 3 chert 1 elongated basalt flake
Simple or one-piece fish-hooks point leg shank leg bases only	1 with tip sharply intumed (f)	1 with intumed tip(g) 5 with 3 styles of line attachment(a-e) 4 broken portions
Fish-hook cores		1 large 45mm (j) 4 medium 20-30mm(k) 2 small 15mm.
Worked bone splinters		3 small, 2 large
Tubular necklace unit		2 bird bone (i,h)
Imitation "whale tooth" pendant		1 with tail broken (n)

* Letters refer to Fig. 1.

encountered in excavation were reproduced in an irregular pattern. The nature of the artefacts recovered, bone, chert, drill points, tabs and fish-hook cores, shanks and points were considerable evidence for assuming that this was a working site for the manufacture of fish-hooks.

A small quantity of fish bones representing several species including snapper were recovered. Both the teeth, jaw and long bones of the rat and dog were present. Bird bones, including 42 small splinters of moa bone, were the most common; several other bird species also being represented. One chip of human bone was encountered.

The following species of shell were present: Cookia sulcata, Pecten novaezelandiae, Lunella smaragda, Spisula equalateralis, Cellana denticulata and ?Cabestana spengleri.

Site N40/1 - Upper Midden

The second site investigated was a culture level, showing up in section in an eroded sand dune facing the beach. It was situated approximately one mile towards the southern end of the beach from Site N40/3.

A pit 4 feet by 3 feet was excavated and the layers exposed to view in the eroded face proved consistent throughout. These consisted of approximately three feet of near-white sand overburden which gave way to a layer of shell and light grey sand, which yielded numerous andesite flakes. This layer in turn proved to be overlying a scooped fireplace containing a compounded greasy black earth and broken hangi stones showing evidence of firing. Two postholes were uncovered immediately adjacent to the fireplace. They had been dug into the natural sand base and filled with the material overlying the fireplace.

Because these investigations were confined to small areas, and because of the limited time and labour available, no total pattern emerged but they served to emphasise the need for early full scale investigation of coastal sites which are suffering rapid destruction. The author and Mr R. Jolly would like to record a vote of thanks to Mr. Coleman and his son, of Waihi, without whose help even these confined investigations would have been impossible.