



NEW ZEALAND
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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OTAIHAPE FIELD GROUP

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by R.A.L. Batley

As the result of a meeting held at Taihape on 29th September, 1960, the Otaihape Field Group was formed to carry out field studies and archaeological research within the upper catchment of the Rangitikei River and the adjacent high country (1).

During the year an attempt was made to introduce members to various aspects of the Group's activities with a number of field trips and two archaeological excavations. Despite unfavourable weather conditions which curtailed outdoor activities during the latter part of the season the field trips were well attended by members and a number of interested visitors.

The first field day was held on 30th October, 1960, at the Waiu Gunfighters' Pa on the Waiouru Military Reserve at an altitude of 3,280 ft. above sea level. This historic earthwork was constructed in 1880 by the Ngati Whiti and Ngati Tama tribes of Moawhango to prevent the occupation of portion of the Rangipo-Waiu Block by Major Kemp and his followers. During the field day members of the Group located a further defensive earthwork with palisade posts in situ a short distance SSE of the main pa. Later, on the return trip to Waiouru, members located a kaikawaka (mountain-cedar) mutilated by partial bark removal in a high altitude motu (island of bush) near the Auhitotara trig. While bark removal from totara (Podocarpus totara and P. hallii) by the Maori was a common practice within the district (2), this is the first record of bark removal from kaikawaka (Libocedrus bidwillii) and it is hoped to carry out tree-ring dating on this specimen.

In November, 1960, a party of Group members enlarged an exploratory trench in the "Six Hundred Sheep Cave" at Omatane and located pipi and mussel shells which had been brought inland from the coast, which in a direct line to the mouth of the Rangitikei River is 55 miles distant. A systematic excavation of this large rock shelter is planned by the Group for the future.

During March, 1961, the Group visited Pohokura which lies south of the Taihape-Napier Road in the Northern Ruahine area. This expedition carried out a weekend reconnaissance of the locality in an attempt to follow traditional Maori information. Messrs N. L. Elder, of Havelock North, and D. R. McQueen, of Tokoroa, accompanied the party and contributed to a discussion on the "Northern Ruahine" during an evening meeting at the camp.

On 26th March, the Group commenced the excavation of a rectangular pit at Te Manukairakau on the edge of the Moawhango River terrace under the direction of Mr Jack Golson. This excavation was continued in April, but later adverse weather prevented further work on the site. The completion of this excavation remains an important item for the coming season.

Throughout the year individual members have carried out a number of private field trips and investigations. Mr G. C. Hard, veterinary surgeon of Taihape, continues his investigation of skeletal features of the Maori dog and would welcome further material from archaeological sites in New Zealand or the Pacific. Apart from the excavation programme for the coming season, the Group hopes to carry out field recording of a number of historic Maori settlements that are mentioned in the journals of early European travellers.

References

- (1) Otaihape is the name of a tributary of the Hautapu River from which the town of Taihape takes its name.
- (2) Batley in Journal of the Polynesian Society, September, 1956, Vol. 65, No. 3, pp. 232-244.

THE WELLINGTON ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

by J.R.S. Daniels

Archaeological work in Wellington took a step forward last year with the foundation of the Wellington Archaeological Society. The inaugural meeting was held in the Dominion Museum on 21st July, 1960. We were very fortunate in having Mr Jack Golson to deliver an address, and his resume of New Zealand archaeology, given in the best Golson manner, must have done more than anything else to create enthusiasm for the Society. A committee was set up at the same meeting, with Dr G. Blake-Palmer as Chairman, and Mr C. D. Smart as Secretary.

The Society has held two full-scale field trips, one to Paekakariki and the other to Palliser Bay. The second was guided by Mr G. L. Adkin. Both of these trips were very well attended. During the winter of 1961 the Society also held two evening sessions to outline the N.Z.A.A. Site Recording Scheme to members, and to familiarise them with recording techniques. These were followed by a day's practical recording in the field at Paekakariki, a project which, despite the deplorable weather, was almost embarrassingly popular for the organisers. One of the Society's best evenings was held in September, when Dr Blake-Palmer spoke on "The Uses of Air Photography in Archaeology", a talk illustrated with material from England, France, the Mediterranean, and New Zealand.

In 1962, besides assisting at Colin Smart's Tarata Pa excavations, the Society proposes to hold training sessions in field surveying and excavation, and to hold a small dig near Wellington. Membership now stands at 46 - a promising base for future activities.