



NEW ZEALAND
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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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PRELIMINARY REPORT ON AN ARCHAIC SITE AT TAHUNANUI - NELSON

N.Z.M.S S20/602286
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Some years ago I was shown three small adzes which had been dug from the garden of a residential section at Tahunanui, Nelson. The quantity of argillite flakes visible in the small vegetable garden indicated that the excavation of a trial square or two would be justified.

THE SITE:

The full extent of the site has not yet been determined, but the area under consideration is in the middle of the back lawn of a residential section adjoining the Nelson-Richmond highway and adjacent to the Tahunanui Post Office. Approximately 150 yards to the north-west lies Tahunanui Beach and directly behind the site to the south-east rises the Tahunanui hillside. At one time a small stream ran through the property, but due to draining, levelling and filling in this and adjoining properties, little of the original surface configuration can be seen.

EXCAVATION:

In January, 1964, a trial 5 feet square (M-10) was excavated and this was followed in May, 1964, by a further two squares (K9 and L-10) making a site area of 75 square feet excavated so far.

- Layer 1 Consisted of poorly formed soil, blackened sand and stones. This disturbed layer contained some artifacts and flakes, but also considerable quantities of intrusive material, such as packing case nails, bottle glass, pieces of coal etc. Determination of this layer has been governed by the depth of disturbance which varied from 2 inches to 7 inches.
- Layer 2 Consisted of blackened sand, oven stones and water worn stones and occasional thin lenses of burnt shell. An undisturbed occupation layer which varied in depth from 3 inches to 16 inches.
- Layer 3 Natural layer of loess and stones in one corner of the excavation.
- Layer 4 Natural layer of large water worn stones and clean sand. At same level as Layer 3.

ARTIFACTS:

Although the area excavated was quite small, the density of artifactual material was high. Much of the material, however, was fragmentary.

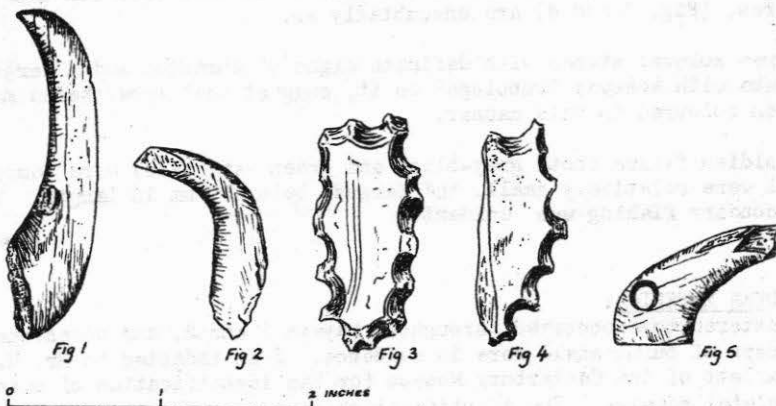
Artifacts Recovered:-

Adze portions	20
Drill points	45
Stone knives (?)	2
Grooved sinkers	1
One piece hooks	2
Fish hook cores	5
Abraded kokawai stones	3
Lure points	1
Files	1
Small bone points (?)	1

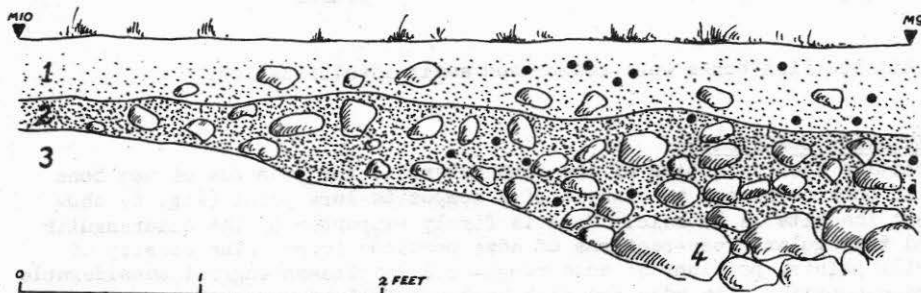
OBSERVATIONS:

Adze portions, most of which were rough-outs were mainly quadrangular in cross-section, but two portions and one small but complete rough-out had triangular sections. All adze portions except one would indicate finished forms of less than 8 inches in length and four adzes previously found on the site conform to this.

REPRESENTATIVE BONE ARTIFACTS



CROSS-SECTION - SQUARE M/10



LAYER 1 SUPERFICIAL SOIL AND BLACK SANDY OCCUPATION (DISTURBED)

LAYER 2 CLEARLY DEFINED OCCUPATION LAYER - BLACK SAND & STONES

LAYER 3 LENS OF LOESS AND SMALL STONES (NATURAL)

LAYER 4 LARGE BOULDERS BELOW OCCUPATION (NATURAL)

● ARTIFACTS

Drill points were mainly of argillite but some of a coarse grained greenish stone also occurred. Polished adze flakes had been retouched for use as drill points in some cases.

Fish hook material appears in the main to be made from moa bone. Two cores, (Fig. 3 and 4) are undoubtedly so.

Three kokawai stones with definite signs of abrasion and a large argillite flake with kokawai "rubbings" on it, suggest that lure shanks may have been coloured in this manner.

Obsidian flakes (both grey-black and green varieties) were common, but all were relatively small, the largest being 37 mm in length. No secondary flaking was evident.

MIDDEN MATERIAL:

Scattered bone occurred throughout Layers 1 and 2, and occasional thin lenses of burnt shell were in evidence. I am indebted to Mr. R.J. Scarlett of the Canterbury Museum for his identification of most of the skeletal remains. The identification list includes:-

<i>Anomalopteryx didiformis</i>	Northern Bush Moa
<i>Arctocephalus forsteri</i>	Southern Fur Seal
<i>Canis familiaris</i>	Polynesian Dog
<i>Hemiphaga n. novaeseelandiae</i>	N.Z. Pigeon
<i>Phalacrocorax (stictocarbo)</i> p. punctatus	Spotted Shag
<i>Gallirallus australis</i> subsp:	(?) Weka
(?)	Petrel

Scattered fish bones were common and await identification.

TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS:

Positive identification of the bone material, the presence of moa bone fish hook cores and an example of a composite lure point (Fig. 5) show that the site is Archaic. This is firmly supported by the quadrangular and triangular cross-sections of adze portions found. The density of drill points, portions of adze rough-outs and flakes suggest considerable pre-occupation with adze and fish hook manufacture.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

My thanks are due to the owners of the property, Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Ballard who not only permitted the excavation but gave every assistance possible and have willingly agreed to further excavation taking place.