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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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RADIO CARBON DATES FOR THE OTUREHUA QUARRY SITE, CENTRAL OTAGO (S 134/1)

The following radio carbon dates have been received from the Institute of Nuclear Sciences, D.S.I.R., Lower Hutt.

<u>Code No.</u>	<u>Sample</u>	<u>Age B.P.</u>	<u>Date A.D./B.C.</u>
R.2054/2	No. 7. Area A, Squares 45u, v, 55a, b, c. Pitt Layer A. Carbonised twigs.	897 ± 27	1053 A.D.
R.2233/2	No. 4. Area A, Square 16u, v. Base Layer 2. Charcoal flecks.	927 ± 82	1023 A.D.
R.2054/1	No. 5. Area A, Square 34k. Top Layer 3. Carbonised post butt.	9,540 ± 145	7590 B.C.
R.2233/3	No. 6. Area A, Square 43e. Top Layer 3. Block of charcoal	9,090 ± 170	7,140 B.C.

The first two samples (7 and 4) were associated with a working floor where prepared cores and blades had been manufactured from orthoquartzite (Level II, or Layers 1 and 2). The two 11th Century estimations provide the earliest evidence of stone working in Murihiku. From the C-14 dates in hand (Papatowai 1185 A.D., Pounawea 1140 A.D., Shag River 1105 A.D., Tai Rua 1119 A.D.) it can be seen that blade manufacture and use was an important feature of the early occupation of Murihiku, and that climatically extreme areas such as Central Otago had been explored and exploited by the first half of the 11th Century.

The second two samples (5 and 6) were stratified immediately below Level II, the post hole associated with sample 5 having been cut from the top of Layer 3 (Level I). The cultural status of the stone material in Level I is questionable, many of the recovered flakes being naturally fractured and heavily patinated. A date for this level in the 8th millenium B.C. is surprising, but cannot be ruled out without consideration. The post butt (Sample 5) was carbonised some time after its burial in the site, and the C-14 age of this charcoal was substantiated by the date for sample 6 in a similar stratigraphical context in another part of the site.

The results of metrical and statistical analyses of these and other assemblages will be given in the excavation report which is in preparation.

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