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Radiocarbon Dates for the Wairarapa - II

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The following series of charcoal samples was collected from archaeological sites on the coastal platform of eastern Palliser Bay, from Whatarangi south to Black Rocks. Each sample dates some aspect of prehistoric ground clearance and the formation of enclosures, with pathways and stone boundary lines. Excavations indicate that in most cases initial removal of stones and brushwood into rows, presumably running along boundaries, was followed by burning. As a result, the stone rows contain abundant charcoal, although in many walls this is now in finely divided form and rich in root hairs. The samples dated, however, were obtained over a period of eighteen months from walls and associated features where conditions had preserved the structure of the charcoal pieces sufficiently well to allow a careful selection of twigs and small diameter stems for radiocarbon dating.

The samples derive from seven 'wall systems,' ranging in size from 20-200 acres. These systems are believed to represent gardens. There is now considerable evidence in support of this claim, including soil enrichment, soil profile alterations, acreage involved, size of enclosures and relationships with other site types. Prevailing climate and soil conditions would preclude cultivation of yam or taro; so it seems that on present evidence production of sweet potato was the most likely focus of this extensive horticultural activity. Excavation of associated occupation sites leaves no doubt as to the archaic status of these gardens, and strongly suggests an economy based on marine and garden products.

<u>Run no.</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Grid reference</u>	<u>Age</u>
R4065/1	Whatarangi	N168/736988	1405 ± 68 A.D.
/2	Te Humenga	N168/727930	1173 ± 56 A.D.
/3	Pararaki	N168/732924	1279 ± 72 A.D.
/4	Pararaki	N168/732924	1219 ± 70 A.D.
/5	Pararaki	N168/733925	1242 ± 72 A.D.
/6	Pararaki	N168/736922	1141 ± 73 A.D.
/7	Kawakawa	N168/748902	1261 ± 66 A.D.
/8	Waiwhero	N168/752871	1473 ± 56 A.D.
/9	Black Rocks	N168/760844	1390 ± 71 A.D.