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RADIOCARBON DATES FROM N44/97, HAHEI, COROMANDEL PENINSULA

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Archaeological site N44/97, at Hahei on the eastern coast of the Coromandel Peninsula, was first investigated in 1976 by Steve Edson and Dorothy Brown, following the report of the finding of a disturbed burial with associated grave goods. Their investigation involved an excavation of the disturbed area and an examination of an adjacent exposed section on the boundary of Lots 20 and 21 (Edson and Brown, 1977:26-27).

A more substantial salvage excavation on an undisturbed area of the site was conducted in May 1979 by myself, with assistance from the University of Auckland Anthropology Department and the New Zealand Historic Places Trust. A further period of fieldwork was carried out on the site in December 1981. The part of N44/97 excavated, Lot 21, is near the area investigated by Edson and Brown and is adjacent to the section cutting recorded by them (see Edson and Brown, 1977:Fig. 1).

An area some 72 m² in total was excavated. The stratigraphy encountered was basically the same as that reported by Edson and Brown for the exposed section and will be discussed in a later report. Artefacts obtained include many hundreds of small tahanga basalt flakes which suggest the occupants of the site were engaged in the re-working of adze roughouts. That the manufacture of one-piece fish hooks was also an important site activity is indicated by the large number of chert and chalcedony drill points and bone fish hook tab cores recovered. Non-portable artefacts included three rectangular and two oval-shaped pits which had been cut into the working floor.

Four charcoal samples were submitted to the Institute of Nuclear Sciences Laboratory, D.S.I.R. for dating. Results are given in Table 1.

The charcoal identifications (see Table 2) indicate that the samples were mostly of younger stem wood and, in most cases, from trees with short life spans. Podocarpus totara/hallii and Agathis australis, however, are both long lived species and either, or both, were present in varying amounts in each of the samples. Several species of the Metrosideros genus are also long lived.

Sample 9030/4 was obtained from a firepit, at the base of Layer 3, which overlay two intercutting pits; its age, therefore,

R. No.	Site Provenance	Old T $\frac{1}{2}$ (5568 yrs)	New T $\frac{1}{2}$ (5730 \pm 40 yrs)	New T $\frac{1}{2}$ (corrected for secular effect)
9030/1	IXVIII - 2 & 4 Firepit, Top L-4	300 \pm 45	309 \pm 47	390 \pm 47
9030/2	IXVIII - 2 & 4 Firepit, Top L-4	556 \pm 64	572 \pm 67	589 \pm 67
9030/3	LXVI-2 & LXVII-I Firepit, Top L-4	549 \pm 60	565 \pm 62	581 \pm 62
9030/4	JXIII - 3 Firepit, Base L-3	700 \pm 60	720 \pm 62	697 \pm 62

TABLE 1. Radiocarbon dates, N44/97, Hahei.

might have been expected to be slightly later than the other samples. However, since the dominant charcoal was Podocarpus totara/hallii and both Agathis australis and Metrosideros sp. were minor components of the sample, the date of 697 \pm 62 may well be 100 or so years too early. Samples 9030/1 and 9030/2 were both taken from the same firepit; the discrepancies between the two dates obtained are difficult to explain. The later date of 390 \pm 47 would certainly appear to be too late, on the basis of the artefactual evidence. The two intermediate dates of 589 \pm 67 and 581 \pm 62 are preferred for the site although the possibility that the site is as recent as 390 \pm 47 cannot be discounted.

These dates contrast markedly to that reported by Edson (1980:41). His date of 740 \pm 50 was obtained from a thin lense of charcoal (wood species unidentified) from an area of the site which is known to have been at least partially disturbed. In addition, despite the inferred relationship between Edson's B1 Layer III and the working floor of Lot 21, it may well be that his sample was derived from an earlier occupation of the site, not represented in Lot 21.

Notwithstanding Edson's (1980:42) caution that the dates he quotes for obsidian hydration cannot be used for more than a "general indication of the site's age", it is interesting to note that the four dates he obtained for green obsidian excavated from the site compare favourably with the age suggested by my charcoal samples 9030/2 and 9030/3.

The artefactual evidence and the radiocarbon dates of N44/97 indicate the archaic nature of the site. The contemporaneity of what are now widely regarded as storage pits rather than dwellings

R. Number	Species	Presence
9030/1	<u>Melicytus ramiflorus</u>	Co-dominant
	<u>Hebe</u> sp.	"
	<u>Agathis australis</u>	Subdominant
	<u>Pittosporum</u> sp.	Minor
9030/2	<u>Pittosporum</u> sp.	Co-dominant
	<u>Melicytus ramiflorus</u>	"
	<u>Agathis australis</u>	Minor
	<u>Pseudopanax colensoi</u> / <u>arboreus</u> group	Rare
9030/3	<u>Melicytus ramiflorus</u>	Dominant
	<u>Melicope</u> sp.	Subdominant
	<u>Hebe</u> sp.	"
	<u>Agathis australis</u>	"
	<u>Podocarpus totara/hallii</u>	"
	Unidentified dicot	Minor
9030/4	<u>Metrosideros</u> sp.	"
	<u>Podocarpus totara/hallii</u>	Dominant
	<u>Melicope</u> sp.	Subdominant
	<u>Metrosideros</u> sp.	Minor
	<u>Agathis australis</u>	"
	<u>Melicytus ramiflorus</u>	"
	<u>Pseudopanax colensoi</u> / <u>arboreus</u>	"
	Fern	"
Unidentified dicot	"	

TABLE 2. Charcoal identifications (B. Molloy, Botany Division, Christchurch).

(Davidson, 1975:18) with the archaic working floor at Hahei adds evidence to that from Skipper's Ridge and Sarah's Gully for early agriculture on the Coromandel Peninsula.

References

- Davidson, J.M. 1975 The excavation of Skipper's Ridge (N40/7), Opito, Coromandel Peninsula, in 1959 and 1960. Rec. Auckland Inst. Mus., 12:1-42.
- Edson, S. and D. Brown 1977 Salvage excavation of an Archaic burial context, N44/97, Hahei. Rec. Auckland Inst. Mus., 14:25-36.
- Edson, S. 1980 A radiocarbon date for the Archaic burial context (N44/97) at Hahei. Rec. Auckland Inst. Mus., 16:41-43.