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RADIOCARBON DATES FROM THE HARRIS ROAD SITEN42/1203 - EAST TAMAKI, AUCKLAND

Peter Douglas  
N.Z. Historic Places Trust  
Auckland

During September 1985 a salvage excavation was conducted at N42/1203, Harris Road, East Tamaki, Auckland (Fig.1). The site is a remnant of the field systems surrounding two nearby volcanic cones: Green Mt. (Matanginui) and Smales Mt. (Pukeo-Tara). Radiocarbon age estimates for organic material from within two separate stone and earth structures at N42/1203 have been received from the Institute of Nuclear Sciences, D.S.I.R., Lower Hutt. The samples were unburnt marine shell (Chione stutchburyi), and two species of carbonised wood, seven-finger (Schefflera digitata) and mahoe (Melicactus ramiflorus).

Lab. No.	Feature	Layer	Years B.P.	
			Old half life	New half life
NZ 7098	Mound 4	II	410 ± 30	422 ± 30
NZ 7160	Mound	Interface		(1)
	Trench	Layer II/III	2650 ± 70	2730 ± 70

(1) Corrected for secular effect (Klein et al 1982) - 2570-2970 yrs. B.P.

TABLE 1. Harris Road radiocarbon dates

The first sample (7098) was recovered from a small convex stone and earth mound (M.4). A raised subsoil formed the base of the mound upon which stones up to 30 cm in diameter had been arranged in a roughly circular fashion. Stone and earth had been piled upon this base to form the sloping sides and capping of the mound. Within this structure excavation revealed a distinct, relatively stone-free, 'pocket' of earth and unburnt shell from which the dated sample was recovered. The sample provides a date for deposition of shell within the mound. Whether this deposition relates to initial construction of the mound or to a period of later use is unknown.

Sample 7160 was recovered from within an excavated mound adjacent to the former Harris Road swamp. Excavation of this feature (M1) revealed its construction to be similar to that discussed for Mound 4 (M.4). A small discrete charcoal lens (25 x 11 cm) was revealed in cross-section at the base of the stone-free pocket and above the raised subsoil. The mat-

erial within this lens was identified by Rod Wallace of the Anthropology Department, University of Auckland.

Species identified were:

Pohutukawa (Metrosideros excelsa)

Pate or seven-finger (Schefflera digitata)

Mahoe (Melicytus ramiflorus)

The sample submitted for dating consisted of 30% mahoe and 70% seven-finger. Ten grams of these two short lived species were hand-sorted from the total sample, which originally weighed 28 g and contained 60% pohutukawa.

Using the corrected date (2570-2970 years B.P.), it can be estimated that the wood sample dated was living in the period between 612-1012 B.C. The most likely cultural explanation for its presence within a feature expected to be roughly contemporaneous with M.4, would appear to be that the sample may have been submerged in the swamp and preserved by the anaerobic conditions present (L. Kermode, per. comm.). At some later date the wood may have been retrieved from the swamp, burnt and included in the mound. Its location at the base of the feature indicates that the wood may have been included in the mound during its construction.

The feature incorporating the swamp and its surrounding area was bulldozed immediately after excavation was completed. No other charcoal was evident as a result of this machine scraping, therefore it seems unlikely that the wood was derived from a nearby fire unrelated to the mound.

Continued industrial expansion has allowed a series of excavations to be conducted within the volcanic areas of South Auckland. Each has examined different aspects of the settlement and use of the fields surrounding the former cone pa. These individual projects constitute what has become a long-term regional investigation of the Auckland stone fields and a range of dates is now available.

Though Sullivan (1975) and Lawlor (1981) have reported age estimates from sites at Wiri, that may extend occupation of this volcanic cone and its field to the 11th and 12th centuries, the majority of dates indicate intensive use of this and other South Auckland volcanic areas during the 16th century. The material in M.4 at Harris Road indicates use of yet another volcanic area during this period.

The widespread and apparently contemporary occupation in the 16th century combined with the diversity of site types being surveyed and excavated suggests that settlement pattern in the Auckland area may be more diverse, complex and extensive than that formerly supposed.

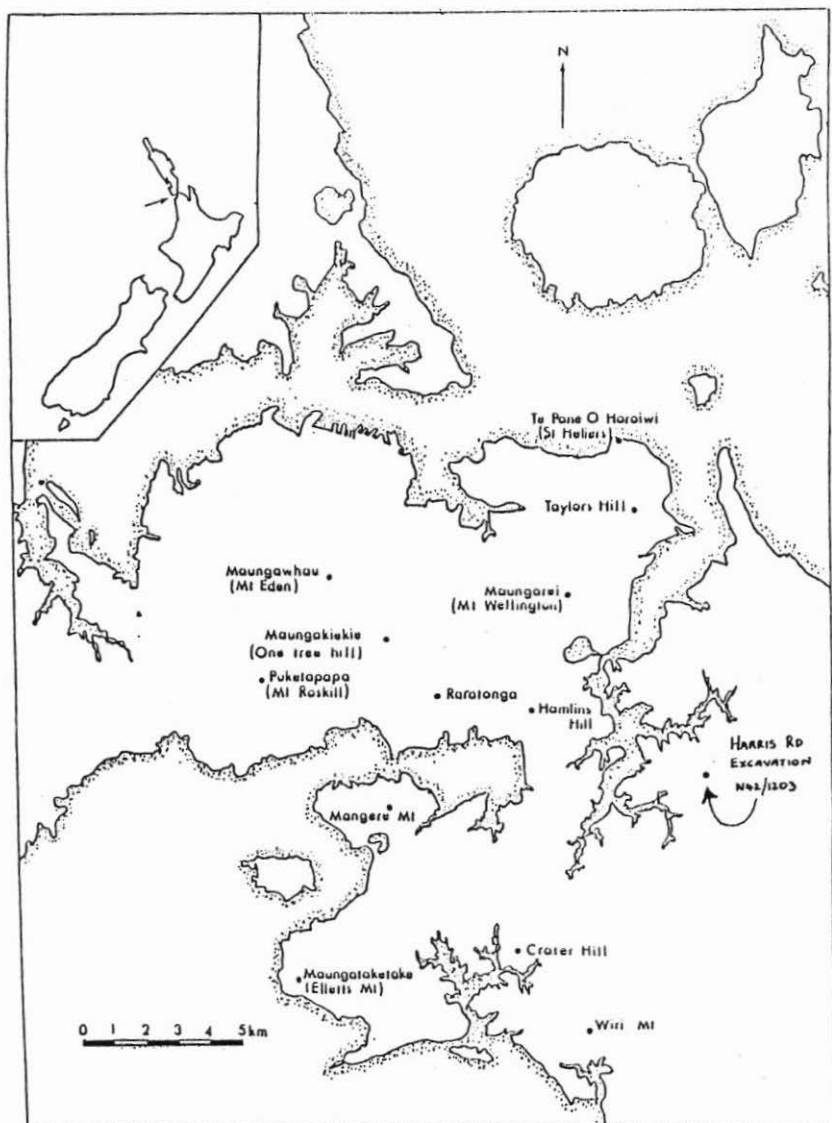


Figure 1. Location of Harris Road site, N42/1203.

Volcanic field	Location	Excavation/Director	No. of Dates	Interpretation
Matukurua	Wiri Mt/ McLaughlins Mt	Puhinui Lawlor	8	The lava field gardens were most intensively used in the 16th century (Lawlor 1981)
Matukurua	Wiri Mt	Wiri Oil Terminal Bulmer	3	The samples date a period of use of stone walled houses to the 16th century (Bulmer, pers. comm.)
Matukurua	Wiri Mt	Wiri Rail I Coates and Rickard	2	The samples date use of the field to 16th century (J. Coates, pers. comm.)
Te Apunga-o-Tainui	Otahuhu	Westfield Furey	3	Age estimates indicate that site was probably occupied in the late 16th century (Furey 1983)
Te Apunga-o-Tainui	Otahuhu	Hawkins Hill Coates	5	Age estimates indicate that the sites were occupied during the latter half of the 16th century (Foster 1986)
Te Apunga-o-Tainui	Otahuhu	Fisher Road Foster and Sewell	4	
Matanginui	East Tamaki	Harris Road Douglas	2	The samples date use of the field in the 16th century

TABLE 2. Radiocarbon dates from volcanic fields in South Auckland.

References

- Foster, R. 1986 Radio-carbon dates from the Fisher Road sites (R11/887, 888, 899) and the Hawkins Hill sites (R11/1394). N.Z.A.A. Newsletter, 29:248-249.
- Furey, L. 1983 Radio-carbon dates from N42/941 Westfield, South Auckland. N.Z.A.A. Newsletter, 26:106.
- Klein, J. et al 1982 Calibration of radio-carbon dates. Tables based on the consensus of the workshop on calibrating the radio-carbon time scale. Radiocarbon, 24:103-150.
- Lawlor, I. 1981 Radio-carbon dates from Puhinui (N42/17), South Auckland. N.Z.A.A. Newsletter, 24:160-163.
- Sullivan, A. 1975 Radio-carbon dates from Wiri (N42/24). N.Z.A.A. Newsletter, 18:206-207.