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**NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER**



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RADIOCARBON DATES FROM WAIRARAPAKeith Cairns  
Masterton

Radiocarbon dates have been received from the Institute of Nuclear Sciences, D.S.I.R., Lower Hutt, for charcoal samples collected from a stratified midden site at Okau, north of Castlepoint, and from an early Palliser Bay burial site.

Okau

The Okau sample, NZ6968, submitted for dating was collected from a stratified section of an undisturbed area of a large midden and cooking site. The site on Okau station, between the road and coastal hills is clearly visible from the Mataikona Road. The sample was collected during excavation, on Site No U26/20, 17 December 1972.

<u>Sample</u>	<u>Dating material</u>	<u>Age Old T<math>\frac{1}{2}</math></u>	<u>Age New T<math>\frac{1}{2}</math></u>
NZ6968	Charcoal	592 $\pm$ 52	610 $\pm$ 53

This sample was taken from excavation Layer 5, a charcoal layer below blackened cooking stones, and dates last use of this cooking fire. Layer 5 was identified as the lowest occupation layer of a stratified section of this site.

The site is located on an ancient sand dune. Small pieces of burnt moa bone were found in the cooking fire. While naturally occurring moa bone and moa egg shell have been recovered from the consolidated sand dune below the occupation layer, there is no other evidence that the burnt moa bone is associated with the eating of moa. However, a broken section of a partly drilled moa bone fish hook tab was found on this site.

Palliser Bay

The Palliser Bay sample, NZ6965, submitted for dating was collected from a stratified section of an undisturbed deposit of charcoal found at the Pararaki River mouth, alongside the road to the Palliser Bay lighthouse.

The sample was collected in January 1968, from the base of a charcoal deposit lying between known burials and dates the last use of a fire thought to be associated with early prehistoric funerary practise.

<u>Sample</u>	<u>Dating material</u>	<u>Age Old T<math>\frac{1}{2}</math></u>	<u>Age New T<math>\frac{1}{2}</math></u>
NZ6965	Charcoal	725 $\pm$ 30	745 $\pm$ 31

In 1958, the site was investigated by myself, Dr T.T.Barrow, and R.H. Broughton, (Cairns 1959:20). Evidence of clearly marked prehistoric burial practise was recorded. The burials were clearly marked by circles of stones. Excavation revealed stone divisions within the circles of stones. Later that year, in October 1958, I visited the Wairau Bay moahunter burial ground and discussed with Jim Eyles the differences between the Palliser Bay and Wairau Bar burials (Cairns 1959:20). Since 1958, there have been a number of excavations on the Pararaki site. The site was originally recorded as N.Z.A.A. Site Number N168/1 in the early days of the Site Recording Scheme.

On 28 May 1959, the site was surveyed by A.J. Geddes, New Zealand Forest Service, and the site plan drawn up. All excavations have been located to this surveyed plan. The second excavation was carried out by a Dominion Museum (now National Museum of New Zealand) party in 1959. Ten years after the initial investigation, the 1968 excavation aimed at collecting a charcoal sample from a specific section of the site located between numbered burials. The excavation stratigraphy revealed a basically simple four layer deposit of sand, charcoal and gravel. Sample NZ6965 was excavated from the charcoal deposit of Layer 3.

This charcoal layer, positioned between recorded burials and sharing a common basal layer suggests that the burials and fire activity are events that are closely linked. The date provides an estimate for this unique site. (Detailed records and photographs will be published elsewhere).

Neither of the charcoal samples, reported here, were submitted for botanical identification. The service was not available at the time of processing. As the samples had been awaiting processing for a number of years it was decided to finalise this aspect of the work.

#### Reference

- Cairns, K. 1959 Work in the Wairarapa. N.Z.A.A. Newsletter, 2:19-20.