



NEW ZEALAND  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
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**NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER**



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RECONNAISSANCE AT SKIPPER'S RIDGE by R.H.Parker.

The new site at Opito reported in the Newsletter of March 1959 was named 'Skipper's Ridge' in recognition of the services to the Auckland University Archaeological Society of Mr. R.A. Chapman, the owner of the property on which were located all the sites at Sarah's Gully and Opito, excavated by the Society.

Investigation and testing of the new site continued at intervals throughout 1959, and five weeks were spent on the site during the summer of 1959-60. In all, thirteen 12 foot squares were excavated down to the natural and recorded. The site fully lived up to our expectations of its potential interest. Evidence was found indicating complex and prolonged occupation with at least four well-defined stages.

I. An early stage characterised by:

A. The construction of largish rectangular pits having a single buttress protruding from one of the long walls and with internal arrangements suggesting that they were living rather than storage pits. Five of these pits were found -- four of them arranged in pairs, longitudinally a narrow dividing wall. In one case this wall was pierced by a tunnel and in the other was low enough to be conveniently stepped over. The arrangement of post-holes indicated that each pair had been covered by a single roof.

B. Two rectangular underground storepits. One of these opened from the long north side of one of the rectangular pits through a well formed doorway, slotted to receive a wooden door frame. Traces of the sill lintel and jambs of the latter were found in a very poor state of preservation. The other store pit stood detached and opened from a small square 'fore-pit' through a similar doorway.

C. Three curious circular 'pot-holes' with well cut vertical sides. They were approximately eighteen inches in diameter and 9 to 10 inches deep. They did not appear to have been hangi, and no guess at their function can be made.

II. A rather insubstantial 'transitional' occupation characterised by a shallow rectangular pit about 7 feet by 5 feet with its floor on two levels, separated by a step about 3 inches high. Associated with this was a small 'bin'-type store pit. The construction of both these could be shown to be later than the filling of the last of the pits of the first occupation, but earlier than the formation of any

part of our Layer III from within which all the structures of the next phase of occupation had been cut.

III. A prolonged occupation characterised by the construction of shallow, rectangular pits with a length/breadth ratio of 2:1 and dimensions averaging about 16 feet by 8 feet by 9 inches. Associated with these (of which at least four were present in the area excavated) were four 'bin' type store pits.

IV. Apparently continuous with this 'Layer III occupation' was the 'Layer II occupation' characterised by a change in the use of the area. From this period date all but one of the large number of hangi discovered. They were heavily concentrated along the western side of the area excavated where they blended into a confused and indocipherable mass of 'hangi disturbance' but a secondary concentration of four or five occurred on the eastern side of the area. The earlier of these were rather deep oval pits about 5 feet long by 3 wide and the later shallow circular scoops about 3 feet in diameter. The only other structure referable to this period was a single small bell-shaped rua situated close to the eastern group of hangi.

Artifactual material was disappointingly slight in quantity. In all we recovered from reliable stratigraphical contexts:

- I. A good quality rectangular stone knife from the fill of a Layer II bin-type store pit;
2. Ten adze fragments which included:
  - a) a small chip of a very beautiful polished adze from a secure Layer IV context.
  - b) Three fragments of 'hog-back' roughouts from Layer III contexts.
  - c) A small ground pebble adze from the bottom of Layer II or top of Layer III. This rather rough adze approximated to a 2B in type, though slight hollowing of back being almost certainly due to the shape of the original pebble rather than to intention.
  - d) 'Files', all from Layer II or the upper part of Layer III.

Sufficient organic material was recovered from all levels for carbon dating. The bone and shell material still awaits

detailed examination but we may note here the presence of Kuri and Tuatara both from Layer III situations.

The area excavated was very small in relation to the total area of the site (probably at least 8 acres) and no firm generalisations can be drawn. The evidence, however, seems sufficient to suggest tentatively:

1) That it is possible to recognise locally in the area excavated, four distinct phases of occupation and that the evidence suggests that they are spread over a prolonged period of time. The evidence obtained from the working floor on the beach front of the site indicates that the earliest occupation cannot be much later than 1300 A.D., and the sum of the evidence which cannot be argued here in full that it may be substantially earlier.

2) That Layer III occupation at least is 'Archaic' in cultural terms, and shows strong parallels to the earlier phase of occupation at Sarah's Gully.

It is clear that the site is one of great interest and of some importance and it is to be hoped that the Society will at some not too distant future date be able to resume its exploration.

NOTES FROM THE AUCKLAND MUSEUM by V.F.Fisher

On March 19, 1960, the extensions to the Auckland War Memorial Museum were officially opened by His Excellency, the Governor-General, the Viscount Cobham. So the Hall of Memories and the War Trophy Halls were opened to the public, and some of the natural history halls re-opened. On the ground floor a new addition -- the Hall of Oceanic Navigation -- was also thrown open to visitors. As its name implies, this new section displays a representative series of canoes from the Pacific Islands. The plan for a special hall to house Oceanic canoes was of long-standing, and so slowly, over the years, canoe after canoe was added to the collection.

Within the restrictions and limitations of a large hall, an attempt has been made to give a hint of the Pacific atmosphere by the use of sand, tropical plants, shells and driftwood. But it is the canoes themselves that are important, for each is different, and all impel attention because of beauty of form, pride of craftsmanship, and constructional details. Several issues of the Newsletter