NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

RECORDING METHODS USED ON NORTH OTAGO SITES

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In a recent Newsletter article the metric scale was advocated for use in site and excavation recording following a successful trial at Huriawa (Gathercole and Knight 1964). Here for comparison is a description of methods used in North Otago, where on odd Saturdays for the past seven years I have been directing archaeological excavations by groups of amateurs. During this time (and for three years before it) the twelve inch foot (as opposed to the decimal foot) has been used as the basic unit of measurement for all surveying and recording, so I am perhaps understandably biased in favour of it. Very briefly the methods we have evolved are as follows:-

From a north-south base line, at least one end of which is marked in concrete for permanency, a grid is laid dividing the site into five-foot squares. This is a suitable size for excavating where the occupational material is not more than four feet deep as is usual in local sites. The grid is lettered in a west-east direction, and numbered south-north, thus any square can be designated by referring to a letter-number combination e.g. C.7.

If the surface is undulating or sloping a ground survey is made with contours at one foot vertical intervals - this is the maximum permissible interval where earthworks are present if an accurate representation is to be made. On small flat sites it is generally more convenient to take spot heights, related to a local datum, at the intersections of grid lines. A theodolite and staff (marked in feet and inches) are used in all survey work.

Excavation is carried out in full five-foot squares without baulks, sections being drawn (on graph paper with 1/12" squares) of each side, but with those of the south and west sides reversed to give, in effect, sections of the north and east sides respectively of adjacent squares. (In practice sections are generally drawn in the usual manner in the field and reversed when a more permanent copy is made later). Thus all sections can be compared directly with others on parallel grid lines. In cases where it is unavoidable to excavate two adjacent squares at the same time, a baulk is left in one until the section along their dividing line is recorded.

Normal excavating procedures are followed, recording being done in Field Books and Square Record Cards (see illustration), one of which is used for each layer to facilitate noting the numbers of bones, shells, artifacts etc., recovered, together with a brief description of the occupational deposit. The cards, each 5" x 3½" in size, are a recent innovation, but they have already proved their worth especially in midden areas as a quick reference for depth, thickness, nature and composition

Material Excavated

SITE_____ GRID SQ._____ _____ DATE

No.	OBJECT	Material	LOCATION		NOTE
				COVER	

Left-hand pages of the Field Book are rubber-stamped as above, opposite pages being used for diagrams and written notes.

SQUARE RECORD CARD

SITE: LAYER: DATE:

BONES	SHELLS	ARTIFACTS
Moa	Species if possible	Bone
Bird		Stone
Dog		Flake
Seal		Flakes
Fish		Obsidian
Other		Firestones

Please describe occupational deposit on back.

M.M.T. 63a

Square Record Cards are used to note numbers of bones, shells, artifacts etc. and a brief description of the occupational deposit.

of layers - data so often required during and after the excavation of a site. The headings used would not be suitable for all types of sites and even in North Otago could be improved by additional headings, though too many would spoil the effectiveness of the card system. Where shells, bones, or firestones are so numerous or fragmentary as to make actual counting impracticable, an estimate based on the count for a portion of the square is made. In a site such as Waimataitai (Trotter 1955) where 50% of the occupational stratum will pass through a $\frac{1}{8}$" sieve and a further 20% through a $\frac{1}{4}$" sieve, it would be quite valueless to count the individual midden components, and here limited use has been made of a modified card to record percentages only of fish-bone, shell, charcoal, etc., in selected sample areas.

Within the five-foot square locations of objects and variations in stratigraphy can be noted to the nearest inch by using a four figure reference number, measurements being made in inches from the west and south sides respectively; thus C.7/0925 would refer to a point nine inches in from the west side and twenty-five inches from the south side of square C.7. On occasions where greater accuracy is required, measurements can easily be noted in full or more often a scale drawing is made on graph paper. The depth of objects when taken from ground level is given as so many inches cover.

Basic field equipment includes:-

Theodolite, staff, 660 ft. and 100 ft. steel tapes, 100 ft. line, 16" x 5/16" round steel pegs, and 2" x 2" wooden pegs, for surveying.

5" pointing trowels, brushes, hand shovels, and long-handled shovels, for excavating.

10 ft. line and line-level, 5 ft. spirit-level, graph paper, field book, square record cards, rules, tape, cameras etc., for recording.

These methods have been used in part or in full on the following sites in which excavation has been undertaken either by myself or by members of the North Otago Scientific and Historical Society and others under my direction during the years mentioned:-

Mata Kaea (S.146/5) 1955-57
Tai Rua (S.136/1) 1957-61
Nenthorn (S.145/1) 1960
Ototara (S.136/2) 1962-5
Te Raka-a-hineatea (S.146/4) 1964

REFERENCE TO SITES:

Gathercole, P.	1961 "Excavations at Tai Rua, Otago, 1961" Newsletter Vol. 4, No. 3, 32-33
" "	and Knight, H. 1964, "Some Recording Methods Employed at Huriawa Peninsular" Newsletter Vol. 7, No. 1, 4-7
Trotter, M.N.	1955. "First Excavations of a Moa Hunter Camp Site at Waimataitai Mouth" J.P.S. Vol. 64, No. 3, 295-303.
" "	1959."Archeological Investigations in North Otago" Newsletter Vol. 2, No. 3, 10-13
" "	1961. "A Quartzite Source Site at Nenthorn, Central Otago." Newsletter Vol. 4, No. 3, 29-32
Otago Anthropological Society,	1960. "Fieldwork in Otago, 1959-60, Tai Rua" Newsletter Vol. 3, No. 3, 14-15

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON AN ARCHAIC SITE AT TAHUNANUI - NELSON

N.Z.M.S S20/602286
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Some years ago I was shown three small adzes which had been dug from the garden of a residential section at Tahunanui, Nelson. The quantity of argillite flakes visible in the small vegetable garden indicated that the excavation of a trial square or two would be justified.

THE SITE:

The full extent of the site has not yet been determined, but the area under consideration is in the middle of the back lawn of a residential section adjoining the Nelson-Richmond highway and adjacent to the Tahunanui Post Office. Approximately 150 yards to the north-west lies Tahunanui Beach and directly behind the site to the south-east rises the Tahunanui hillside. At one time a small stream ran through the property, but due to draining, levelling and filling in this and adjoining properties, little of the original surface configuration can be seen.