



NEW ZEALAND  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION

**NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER**



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At present the Society suffers from a lack of members with a wide knowledge of archaeological techniques. This has thrown the burden of organization on the few experienced members. The great need at present is for training, and a start has been made this year in the excavations at Waitotara and Makara, and in the monthly field days. Site recording is the most valuable activity for the Society at the moment. The Society has not the resources to attempt ambitious excavations at this stage, but a small one every year or so should be a fair target to aim at.

A start in the accumulation of equipment was made with Colin Smart's generous donation of all the equipment bought for the excavations at Tarata. In addition, the Society was fortunate, through the good offices of the National Historic Places Trust, in securing the loan of tents and cooking equipment from the Army for the Tarata excavation. The Dominion Museum has very kindly agreed to store the Society's gear.

This summer the Society hopes to hold a three-weeks camp at Te Ika-a-Maru Bay. This is an area quite unusual in the Wellington vicinity. It contains two pa in close proximity, and large midden and occupation areas with a wide variety of field evidence. It is only about twenty miles from Wellington, but is sufficiently isolated to be unspoiled and relatively unknown.

The summer camp will be only partly an excavation. A concentrated effort will be made to survey and record all sites in the area of the bay. In this way it should be possible to relate the findings of the excavation to their wider context, and to provide a basis for an examination of the nearby but neglected south coast of Wellington.

#### REPORT ON PAREMATA BURIALS

by Colin D. Smart

The Paremata sand flats have long been a favourite collecting ground for local "pothunters". Artifacts representing a wide range of culture variation occur in private or museum collections, or have figured in publications. The widely known midden deposits scattered over the area were thought, however, to have been badly disturbed, largely by military activity, and consequently, unlikely to prove of value to the archaeologist. The recent find of "a fragment of moa bone on a piece of china plate" serves to illustrate this point.

Further destruction of this site within the last few months, led to the discovery by Messrs E.D. Sinclair and C.P. Leonard, of skeletal remains immediately below the newly exposed surface. Two burials were examined in part, and one of these (of a child) provided units of a Dentalium shell necklace. The donation of this material to the Dominion Museum prompted the investigations described below.

A 10ft x 10ft sample square was placed so as to include one burial, the adult, and the square was excavated in two halves on November 1st and 3rd, with the assistance (which I gratefully acknowledge) of Betty Richardson, Maureen O'Rourke, and Messrs E.D. Sinclair, P.C. Leonard and M.G. Hitchings. The square extended out of the disturbed area into deposits which proved to be undisturbed.

Excavation, in miserable weather, revealed deposits of undisturbed occupation debris and three (?) burials. The stratigraphic sequence revealed five layers.

#### 5. SOIL LAYER:

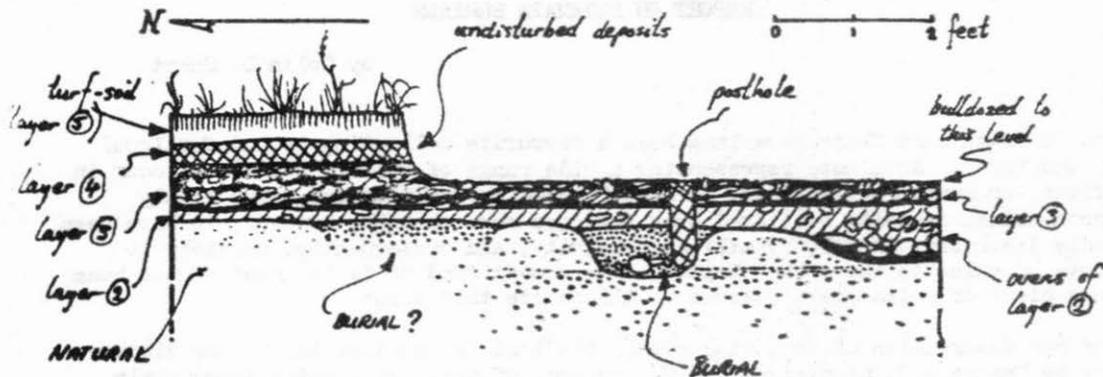
A very light and sandy soil (3"-4") of recent origin, supports a rich growth of grass in areas not so far disturbed. The material recovered from the bottom of this layer probably belongs in time to the layer beneath, and includes a horseshoe, chain link, square nails, brown bottle glass, stoneware sherds and brick fragments, as well as cut bone fragments including sheep.

#### 4. SHELL LAYER:

A deposit of loose, clean and well broken shell material, containing a little earth and clean sand. The layer is from 3"-5" thick with a slightly undulating surface. This type of shell material is found on beaches as a natural deposit, but is not "naturally deposited" in its present position. Rather, it has been redeposited by man and was probably obtained from nearby. Within this material were stoneware sherds identical with those in Layer 5, brick fragments, a human molar and several bone fragments. Whether these artifacts, and those recovered from Layer 5 belong to early European or "European-contacted" Maori, is not clear.

#### POSTHOLES:

A series of 14 circular postholes about 4"-5" in diameter and up to 14" deep below the top of Layer 4, run in an irregular line diagonally across the S.E. quadrant of the square. Shell and earth fill the holes and surround the fragments of wood found in two holes, and at least the top part of this fill contains the broken shell material of Layer 4. The postholes appear



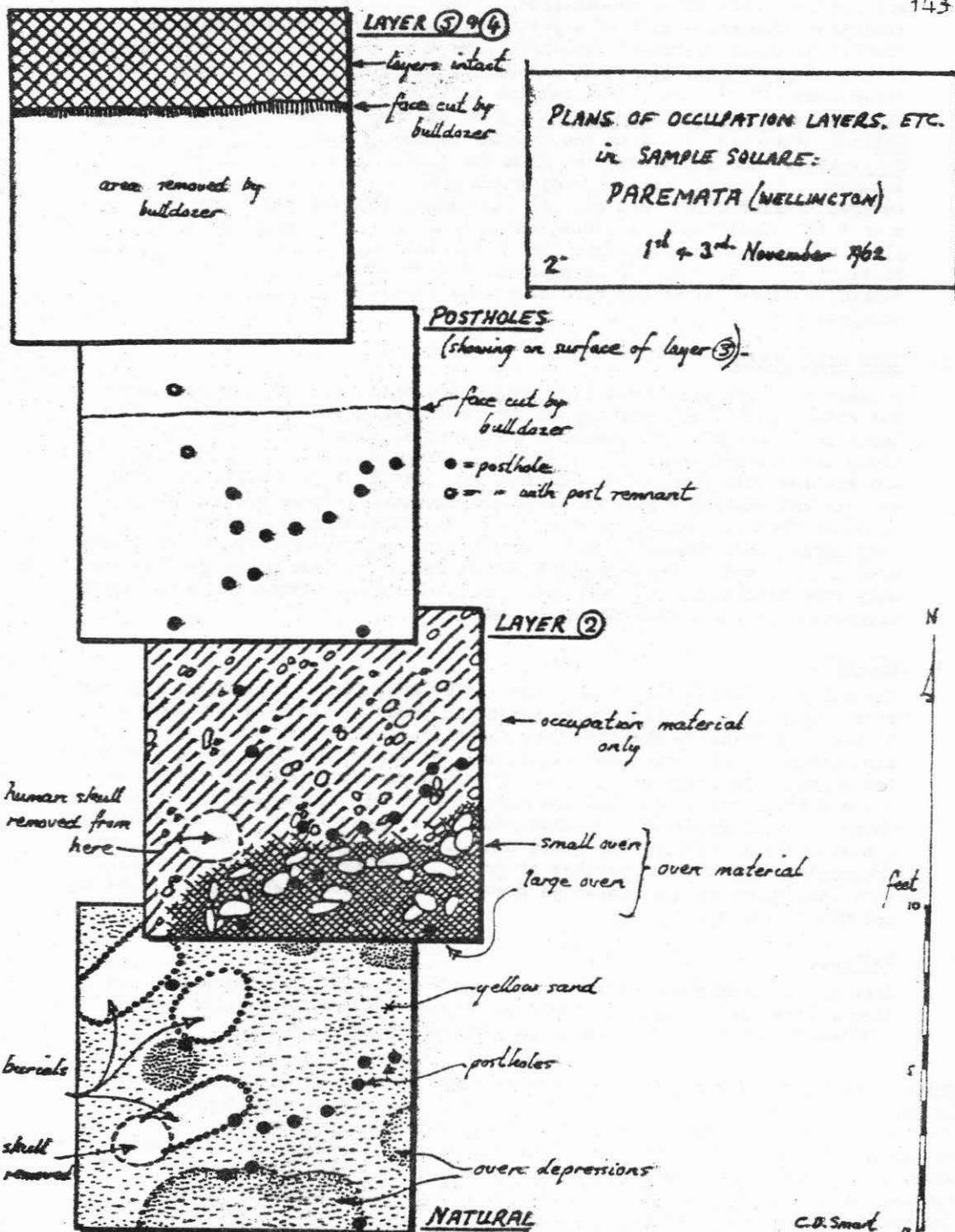
RECONSTRUCTED SECTION ALONG MID-LINE OF SQUARE

C.P.S.

to originate within Layer 4, clearly penetrate Layer 3 and descend into the ovens of Layer 2, the underlying burials and into the natural.

#### 3. OCCUPATION LAYER:

A black layer, 4"-6" thick, containing quantities of shell, bone and stone. The deposit probably spread uniformly over the entire square until a bulldozer removed a few inches over about two thirds of the square. This layer



was the most productive encountered. Stone objects include a piece of sandstone grinder; a chip of a polished, sharp-cornered adze in baked argillite; small flakes of obsidian, some with signs of usage or retouching; flakes of greywacke, limestone and flint; and quantities of broken greywacke oven stones. Shellfish remains include species from the tidal flats (Amphibola, Cominella, Amphidesma), from the rocky shore (Lunella, Cookia, Cellana, Haliotis) and from the coastal beach (Alcithoe, Struthiolaria, Baryspira). The larger species from the tidal flats and rocky shore predominate. Bones of fish (including snapper), birds (including moa and several smaller birds) and mammals (including seal and dog) have not yet been fully identified. A broken point limb of a fish-hook, and a small piece of pointed bone complete the list. This assemblage does not appear distinctive of any particular phase of culture, although the presence of a considerable amount of moa bone fragments could suggest an early date of occupation.

## 2. OCCUPATION LAYER:

A layer of black sand containing only small amounts of occupation debris but with a small amount of gravel spread unevenly through the sand. The layer is 2"-4" thick for the most part, but deepens to 7" in the ovens along the southern edge of the square. These ovens, cut into the natural, are shallow with fairly flat bottoms, are "lined" with a solid charcoal deposit and contain a mass of large and broken greywacke cooking stones. Obsidian flakes, pumice, fishbone, moa bone (including a vertebra and a very large limb fragment), small bird bones, seal and dog bones were recovered in the layer. Two fish-hook points from two-piece hooks provide the only true artifacts. Moa and seal bones were found within the oven, again suggesting an early date of occupation.

## 1. BURIALS:

The burial to which the skull recovered by E.D. Sinclair belongs, appeared below Layer 2. A shallow grave measuring about 4ft long by 16" across by 8" deep, contained a skeleton face downwards, arms by its sides, with the legs broken at mid-thigh and shins, and the ankles and feet placed behind the pelvis. No signs of the missing leg sections appeared in the grave, but a missing astragalus and one patella were recovered from the layer above. Burial probably took place some time after death. The yellow-brown gravel material filling the grave contained a few fish, moa and seal bone fragments. Two similar patches of gravel, probably representing burials, were seen close to the excavated grave. These burials clearly pre-date the occupation Layer 2.

## NATURAL:

Some 6" of clean yellow sand, containing occasional shell fragments, overlies a clean yellow gravel. Both ovens and burials, as well as several postholes, penetrate the top of the gravel layer.

This investigation shows the site to be the most promising so far encountered in the Wellington District. The environment of the Porirua and Pauatahanui Harbours, as well as Paremata and the Whitireia peninsula at the harbour entrance, offers a most attractive field for study. Much of the evidence has already been destroyed, some (including Paremata) is being destroyed now, while further areas (notably the Whitireia peninsula) are scheduled for future destruction by subdivision for housing. With so much already lost in the Wellington District, it is obvious that the Paremata-Porirua area has a prior claim to any investigations carried out in the near future.