



NEW ZEALAND
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



This document is made available by The New Zealand Archaeological Association under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

To view a copy of this license, visit
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>.

SOME RECORDING METHODS EMPLOYED AT HURIAWA PENINSULA, OTAGO, 1963

P. Gathercole and H. Knight

This article discusses some of the recording techniques employed during the excavations at the pa site on the Huriawa Peninsula, Karitane, Otago, in January, 1963. These excavations were undertaken by the Otago Anthropological Society, and organised as a training school for the Adult Education Department, University of Otago. Although evolved to meet the needs of students attending a course in excavation, some of the methods employed have a wider application, and may be of interest to other members of the Association. Similar techniques, of course, may well be in use elsewhere in New Zealand.

Systematic work has been undertaken at the site only once before, (Mackay and Trotter, 1961). During the 1963 excavation, a departure was made from normal New Zealand practice in that the metric scale of measurement was used for all investigations. In addition, several new responsibilities within the general scheme of recording were given to the leaders of each of the work-teams, involving a more extensive use of field notebooks. These innovations are discussed below, as are certain other recording procedures which stemmed from them.

THE USE OF THE METRIC SCALE:

Our equipment consisted of:-

- (a) Rabone Tape (50 m.), graduated throughout in metres and centimetres
- (b) Range Poles (6), constructed locally, with metal tip; each 2 m. long, standard surveying type, painted red, white, black, white at 0.5 m. intervals
- (c) Measuring Sticks (4), each 0.5 m. long, with square section, painted red, white, black, white, red at 10 cm. intervals on three faces and, in an alternating colour sequence, at 1 cm. intervals on the fourth face
- (d) Folding Surveying Staff (2 m. when extended)
- (e) Sectional Paper, in tenths

We found that the advantages of the metric system over the traditional one far outweighed the disadvantages. The advantages were:-

- (1) The initial survey of a complicated and large site was carried out quickly and accurately. The whole peninsula was first gridded into 100 m. units on True North and South lines of ordinate values and East and west abscissa values based on the Trigonometrical Station G, which is situated on the peninsula. Next, the area chosen for excavation was related to the overall grid by the co-ordination of the local base employed, and the necessary local grid surveyed in metres from this base.

- (2) It was found satisfactory to plot contours at 1 m. vertical intervals. The folding metric staff was used, in conjunction with a dumpy level.
- (3) It was much simpler to lay out excavation squares, take co-ordinates and draw accurate plans and sections. The expression of measurements as decimals of a metre encouraged precision, the recording being carried to one, two or three decimal places, as appropriate.

The co-ordinate points of the local grid were indicated on the ground by square-sectioned pegs, painted white, on which the co-ordinates were written in black marker. The altitude of the pegs was obtained from the site plan, and each team leader related his datum level for stratigraphical recording to the nearest peg.

The only disadvantage worth mentioning was the initial unfamiliarity of workers with the metric system as such. This was hardly surprising, but quickly overcome.

On the basis of our experience, we would suggest that the metric system be more widely used in New Zealand, and that the Council of the N.Z.A.A. consider recommending its use for all new excavations from a specified date in the near future. This would bring local practice into line with that employed in many countries overseas. It should be possible, however, for the sake of those members who wish to have their measurements expressed in the traditional way, to prepare excavation reports with both sets of measurements shown.

THE USE OF FIELD NOTEBOOKS:

These were prepared before the excavation, with alternate sheets of ruled and sectional paper. At the front of each book was an index, brought up-to-date daily, which indicated briefly the nature of the work described on each page or relevant group of pages. The entries were completed at frequent intervals, and were the responsibility of the team leaders. These comprised not only the description of all work done (with relevant scale drawings on the opposite squared sheet), but also comments on its possible significance. Finds were listed, and the bag numbers of each added after they had been entered in the Bag Book (discussed below). An entry concerning new work was begun on a fresh page.

Regular checking by the instructors ensured that the books were kept up-to-date. The record, though usually full, was sometimes inaccurate on minor points, and these errors were corrected when the books were called in for more extensive checking and discussion with team leaders. Generally speaking, the system was successful; it gave more people a sense of responsibility and of participation in the work, and it ensured an appreciation of the need for regular recording.

RELATED RECORDING PROCEDURES:

A concomitant development was the more extensive use of the Bag Book. This was the responsibility of a special officer, who was free of digging duties, but who organised the recording, sorting and cleaning of all finds. Bags of finds were allocated a serial number, and once or twice each day, with the help of the team leaders, the following details were entered into the Bag Book, from information supplied either on the bags or on labels attached:-

Location (including square and layer numbers, and exact co-ordinates where necessary)

Description of finds

Number of items

Associations

Date

The name of the team leader and other relevant remarks, such as provisional faunal identifications and cross-references to other bags of associated material, were also noted. The Bag Book serial number was then marked on the bag and entered in the team leader's field notebook.

Every student was issued with a set of cyclostyled instructions on how to use the field notebooks, and on the methods of bagging. The bagging was supervised by the team leader, and the contents checked by the officer when bag numbers were allocated. The various types of finds were tagged separately, and each described by means of a simple code, to save time. The code employed was as follows:-

- 1a shell
- 1b fish bone
- 1c bird bone and egg shell
- 1d other bones
- 1e pockets of small stones
- 1f wood (unworked)
- 2a shell artefacts
- 3a worked bone
- 3b bone artefacts
- 4a stone flakes
- 4b other stone artefacts
- 4c ochre
- 5a wooden artefacts
- 5b wood (possibly structural)
- 5c charcoal
- 6 stones larger than a golf ball
- 7a soil samples
- 7b posthole fills
- 7c faecal samples

C 14 samples were treated separately.

Other finds (e.g. European artefacts) were described in full.

CONCLUSION:

We found that these methods of recording had several advantages. Firstly, it was easy to keep track of all the finds, prepare provisional lists of distributions, and ensure that no dross was retained. Secondly, the constant check prevented any undue accumulation of "unprocessed" finds, especially faunal material. Thirdly, and most important, these procedures, though basically simple, were found to be capable of flexible modification to fit the various needs of the excavation as it progressed. Overall, they encouraged a disciplined approach to recording which matched that required in the actual digging, and they will of course be reviewed and modified as necessary.

Finally, there were a number of other, more unexpected benefits. As teams took pride in the detail of their work, the team leader was better equipped to contribute suggestions to the regular reviews of digging progress held for all members of the excavation. These reviews took place both on the site, where mainly stratigraphical problems were discussed, and in the evenings at the camp. The latter sessions were concerned primarily with discussions on the finds, including specialist contributions on artefacts, faunal remains and so on, and were designed to improve the general knowledge of the excavators about the whole site. It was found that this wider appreciation was especially valuable in connection with our dealings with the general public, when students were asked to act as guides for groups of visitors and were expected to know the details of the various operations being undertaken. Furthermore, the visitors, seeing the nature of the recording employed as a matter of routine, appreciated more readily that excavation was not simply a process of digging.

Reference:

Mackay, S. and Trotter, M.M., 1961. "Pa a Te Wera, Huriawa Peninsula, Karitane", N.Z.A.A. Newsletter, 4, No. 3: 26-29.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND ADULT EDUCATION: SOME EXPERIENCES IN OTAGO

P. Gathercole

In its latest report on site preservation, the scheduled site committee of Council has drawn attention to the value of adult education classes in archaeology. This note discusses some developments in this field in Otago in recent years, where a scheme has evolved with the full co-operation of the Adult Education Department, University of Otago. Adult Education Classes in archaeology have been held in the Province for a good many years notably those run by Mr. L. Lockertie, and several people drawn into this scheme received their introduction to the subject under his guidance. The