



NEW ZEALAND
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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THE WELLINGTON ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

by J.R.S. Daniels.

The Wellington Archaeological Society, which was founded in July 1960, now has a membership of 63. The Society is a broadly-based body and stands completely on its own feet, having no formal links with either the University or the Dominion Museum. There is, however, provision for the Director of the Museum to appoint a representative on the committee, and Museum staff have helped the Society on many occasions.

The present committee comprises: Dr G. Blake-Palmer, Chairman; Mr C.D. Smart, Vice-Chairman; Mr J.R.S. Daniels, Vice-Chairman; Maureen O'Rourke, Secretary; Mr M.G. Hitchings, Treasurer; Mrs M. Hall, Mr F. Knox, and Miss M.J. Oliver.

The committee has tried to avoid concentrating exclusively on one form of activity. The result had been a varied year's activities. Nearly 20 Society members again took part in excavations at Tarata Pa, Waitotara, under Colin Smart, during the Christmas-New Year period. The knowledge gained there was put to use at Easter when the Society held its first Wellington excavations on the headland pa at Makara. This pa has been known for a long time as one of the most striking around Wellington, and it was defended by a ditch and a still quite steep scarp surmounted by a low bank. The results of the excavation are summarised on pp.151-57. The excavation did much to help Society members to work together and gain confidence in their own efforts.

Regular monthly site-recording trips have been held throughout the year. Field days have been a popular activity, and twenty sites have so far been recorded. The field group has settled down to a core of about a dozen, all of whom have valuable knowledge or experience to contribute. The group has, contrary to a widespread misbelief about Wellington, found ample field evidence within a twenty-mile radius of the city area to keep it fully occupied. The west coast from Te Ika-a-Maru Bay north to Porirua Harbour has received particularly close attention. It is too soon yet to find definite occupation patterns emerging, but this rather inhospitable part of Wellington appears to have been a key area in the whole district.

Our experience has been that, although field days need some organising if they are to be successful, and need to be kept to a fairly small group, they are the most rewarding activity that an amateur group can undertake.

The following meetings were held this year:-

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| 3 May | : Mr P. Gathercole | "Some problems of archaeological technique" |
| 8 May | : Dr R.A. Falla | "Man and moa in the New Zealand prehistoric environment" |
| 6 June | : Seminar discussion | on the Makara excavation |
| 19 June | : Visit to "Hiwiroa" | (The home of Mr & Mrs R.W. Pomare) |
| 24 July | : Mr E.P. Saunders | "An illustrated talk on a recent tour of Italy and the Aegean" (Joint meeting with the Wellington Branch of the Classical Association) |
| 7 Aug | : Miss M. Oliver | "New Zealand stone adzes" |
| 28 Aug | : Miss J. Davidson | "A summer excavation on Tahiti, 1961/62" |
| 19 Sept | : Annual Meeting | |

The evening spent at "Hiwiroa", the Belmont home of Mr and Mrs R.W. Pomare, was a unique opportunity to see what must be one of the finest private collections of archaeological and historical material in the country.

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.