



NEW ZEALAND
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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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WHAKAEPa:
INVESTIGATIONS OF SITE S74/9

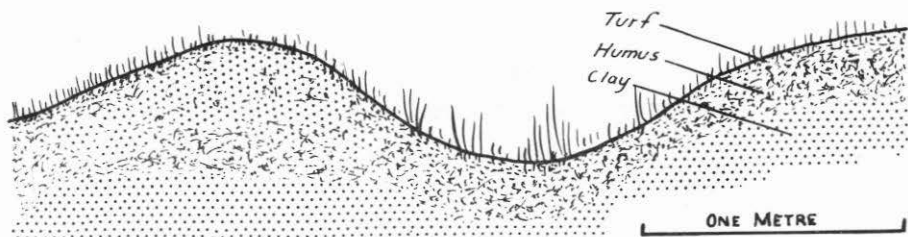
R. J. Scarlett,
Canterbury Museum.

This site, in North Canterbury (NZMSL S74/267737) is a roughly rectangular bank and ditch enclosure, near Thirteen Mile Bush, and close to the steep bank of the north branch of the Selwyn River. It lies between the Upper Hawkins River, a tributary of the Selwyn, and the Whakaepa (Upper Selwyn). (See David Harrowfield's note in the NZAA Newsletter 5 (2): 111).

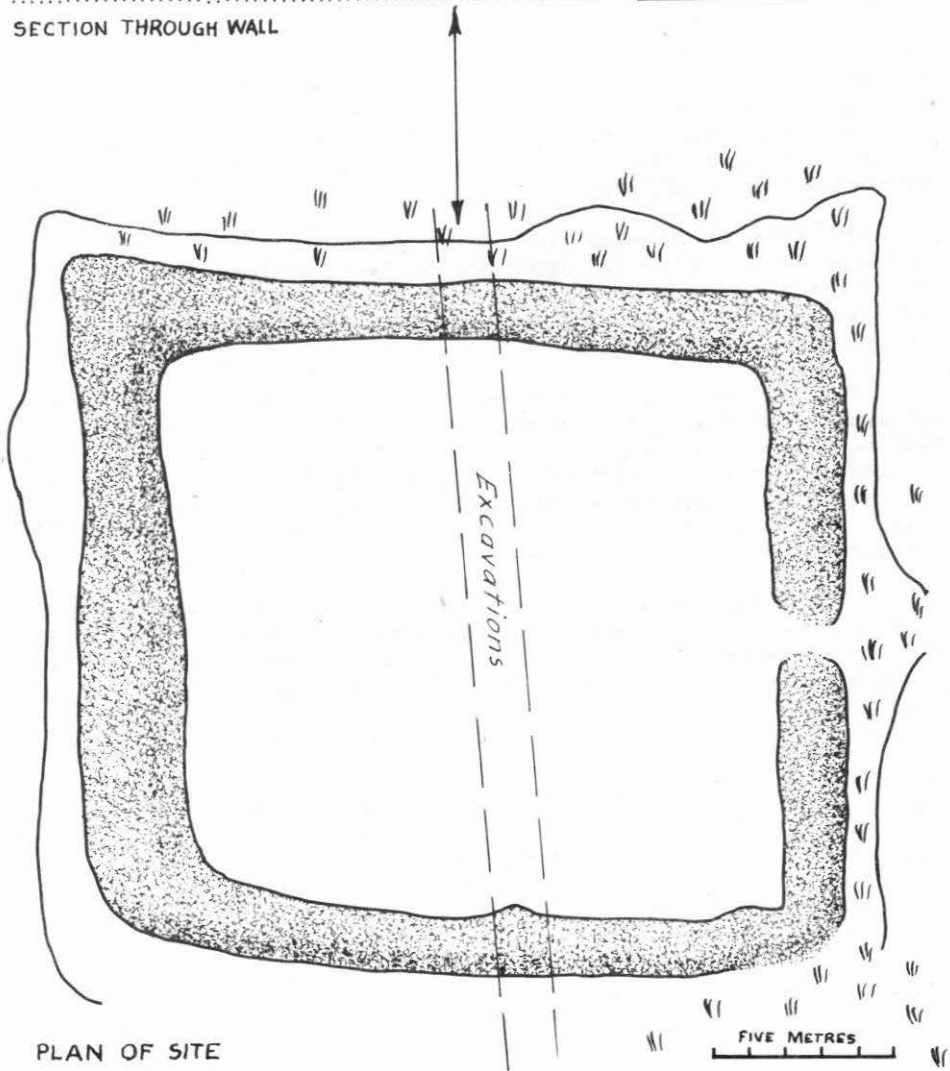
Some time before excavation, Tony Fomison had made a sketch plan of the enclosure, and a fortnight before, Jack McLellan, Mark Johnson, and Kathleen Fletcher had surveyed this site and two enclosures of similar appearance - these two are still not investigated - and had laid out some lines of pegs on S74/9.

From 29 November until 6 December 1964, S74/9 was excavated under my supervision, by Charles Northcroft, who did most of the section drawing and the photography, Graeme Young, Kelvin Lynn, Michael de Hamel, and Lance Jennings, in addition to myself. Transport for the team and our gear was provided by Dr Roger Duff and Messrs Robin Wood, Roger Nicholl, and Hamish Deans. It was at Mr Deans's request that the excavation was begun.

The enclosure was roughly 55ft by 60ft (16.75m x 18.25m), a low bank, which excavation showed had been topped by posts, presumably for a fence, with a gap - probably for a gateway - about midway along the eastern side. On the northern side, the ground was swampy, and to a lesser extent, the southern side was also. This swampiness was probably a result of the banks preventing the natural flow of water down the gently sloping paddock in which the enclosure lies. We set up camp on the outskirts of a black beech forest, about 200 metres from the southern bank of the enclosure, and in the afternoon laid out the N. line of pegs, North to South across the enclosure, and a mid-line, five feet from this line and five feet from the M. line, which had been pegged 10 feet away by the earlier survey party. Along this, between the mid-line and N. line, we divided the area into 5ft by 10ft "squares", which eventually became a continuous trench (excepting



SECTION THROUGH WALL



PLAN OF SITE

baulks) north to south (see plan and section) and extended 10 feet south of the embankment. We left six-inch baulks at the sides, and one-foot baulks at the ends of the squares, making the effective squares 4ft by 8ft (i.e. 1.2m by 2.4m approximately - this was in the days before metrication). The shallow ditch had apparently been formed in throwing up the embankment. Where we sectioned it at the northern end, considerable difficulty was experienced with water. The top humus and turf averaged 6cm to 7cm in depth, the bottom humus 7cm to 9cm along the line of squares, and underneath this, clay. Apart from postholes in the bank, no artefacts were found. Charcoal, either isolated fragments or in scattered accumulations, appeared at various depths. It could have resulted from former bush-fires or tussock burning. It did not appear to be the result of human occupation of the site. The positions of all this charcoal were recorded, but at the end of the dig appeared to be random scattering.

One posthole and two more uncertain holes about 30cm apart were found in the northern bank. They appeared after about 12cm of soil had been removed and were all half-sectioned. The certain posthole started 12.5cm from the surface, and had a depth of 18cm (30.5cm from the surface). It measured 15cm north to south and 18cm east to west. One of the uncertain holes had a depth of 10cm from its first appearance, 23cm from the surface, and had an irregular pear shape, 18cm north-south, 33cm east-west. The other, which may have been a stake hole, was 7.5cm deep and 20cm from the surface.

The southern bank, where excavated, had one posthole, which appeared 12cm from the surface, under the turf and a thin layer of humus, and had a clay cap, but the fill was humus. The depth was 12.5cm and it was 15cm by 16cm in diameter.

The more southern square had a very uneven clay bottom, suggesting a former watercourse.

On the completion of the dig, all squares were filled in and the turf was replaced.

I had been puzzled for years as to the reason for this structure, until Michael Trotter's "Investigations of Otokitoki, Banks Peninsula" appeared in NZAA Newsletter 19 (3), when its similarity to his "European Sheepfold" became apparent, and so I have given this brief account of it - it does not deserve a more lengthy treatment. I had for years hoped to return to the site, to investigate the presumed "gateway" in the Eastern bank, but had been unable to do so. It now seems unnecessary.